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BY JOHN HABBERTON

AUTHOR OF "HELEN'S BABIES"

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OUT AT TWINNETT'S

BY

JOHN HABBERTON

AUTHOR OF

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OUT AT TWINNETT'S.

CHAPTER I.

COMRADES, NOT FRIENDS.

"I THINK, Maile, that to entertain such a party you won't find a pleasanter place than out at Twinnett's."

The speaker was Harry Burnham, a well-dressed, brisk-mannered man who would come under the definition "not yet old;" and his companion, who was lying on the rocks of one of the many points that jut from the northern shore of Long Island Sound, was equally well attired, somewhat languid of manner, and apparently of about Burnham's age.

"I'm ever so much obliged, Burnham," said Maile. "I ought to know the suburbs of New York better, having been born and brought up in the city; but business, the primal curse, has always kept me close in town, except when I have been compelled to go away in order to forget business. How I envy you fellows who live on the edge of the city, yet have all the advantages of the country!"

"Follow our example, my dear fellow, and you

won't any longer have the sin of envy on your conscience."

"Thanks—many thanks; but I fear that the experience would be more depressing than the sin. 'Out at Twinnett's,' you said; now, if you'll have the kindness to tell me where Twinnett's is, and how to get there, I——"

"Look off shore, right in front of us—about a mile. That is Twinnett's."

"Ah! that rocky island just about large enough to hold the only house I can see on it?"

"Just so, though please remember that distance diminishes size at an alarming rate. The actual area of the island is about five acres; and the house, which from here looks like a mere shed, has a large piazza and cosy dining-room. The occasional patches of green you see are trees, which the winds have kept so low at the tops that the lower branches have spread until they cast a grateful shade."

"Delightful!" murmured Maile. "And Twinnett —I suppose that is the owner's name—who and what is he?"

"An old sailor with reddish-brown face, long grey beard, a tangle of grey hair, and big smoked glass goggles."

"Old sailor, eh? American name, too. How startling! And, like most old sailors, he has a meddlesome wife and a lot of intrusive youngsters, I suppose, who want to take a visitor out rowing when he'd rather devote himself to a cigar ashore."

"Nonsense! Twinnett is a bachelor, or widower, or runaway husband, perhaps. His only family is a

Newfoundland dog, unless there has been a change since I last was there. Of course I don't count his cow, chickens, pigs, and other live stock, of which he keeps a great deal, as part of the family. He is simply an old sailor who 'squatted' on that island two or three years ago, comes to town occasionally to sell fish and buy groceries, and who has slowly made a reputation for supplying clam-bakes, and occasionally more elaborate repasts, to small parties who go out there. Yachting-parties from the city drop in on him frequently, since it has been discovered that the old man manages to always have good wines and cigars in stock."

"Impossible—if he is a sailor. Sailors draw a line on the outer side of the strongest brandy and smoking tobacco."

"I don't pretend to account for the exception," said Burnham. "Perhaps Twinnett turned pirate or smuggler in a quiet way, and ran in a choice stock for his rocky cellar. I simply know, by sight, smell, and taste, that they are there, and that the prices are not prohibitory."

"Delightful!" answered Maile; "again I say delightful! And how is one to reach this island refectory?"

"Hire a boat somewhere, and land at a little pier he has built at the outer side of the island. He will serve what he chances to have; he will cook it and put it on the table, after which you and your guests will have to help yourselves, for the old fellow keeps no servants. If your heart is set on going there, write him at our post-office—address Captain

Twinnett—a few days in advance, naming a date, so as to be sure to find him at home; tell him how many people you want to bring, and, so there will be no mistake, enclose a greenback in proof of good faith, for mischievous boys have occasionally played tricks on him."

"Burnham," said Maile, slowly arising from the rocks, "I'm glad I came out to spend an afternoon with you—I really am. To find a new place to which to take a party for lunch, a glass, and a chat—a place where persons who aren't guests can't casually drop in just when conversation happens to become more confidential, on business or something else, is a rare experience."

"I'm glad too that you came, if you have been so peculiarly benefited," said Burnham, soberly.

"Now, my dear fellow," exclaimed Maile, after looking sidewise a moment, "don't take it in that way! You certainly can't imagine that an old comrade, to whom your canteen was 'first aid to the injured' at Gettysburg, can have dropped business and come out here to-day merely to learn about Twinnett's? Confound you! I never even heard of Twinnett before."

"Of course you never did, my dear fellow, and I am a brute—or bilious," replied Burnham. "You know it was always my weakness to go off half-cock before I had thought of where the shot might strike."

"As our friend the enemy remembers to his sorrow," said Maile. "Your regiment——"

"Hang the blessed old regiment; the war is over!" exclaimed Burnham.

"But its memories remain, especially that of your

canteen at Gettysburg, and the slight limp I brought away and can't forget."

"And which I have always coveted," said Burnham. "By the way, we've not more than time to reach home in time for dinner. My wife is a most forgiving creature, but to be late for dinner is——"

"My dear fellow, you are ever so good, but really I daren't be out of town any longer. You know what juggling has been going on in Black Gulch stocks. If I don't drop into two or three hotels during the evening, I shan't know how to go into the market in the morning. I really must take an early train in. You know perfectly well that, once at table with you and your charming wife, I couldn't tear myself away in time to reach New York until everybody but policemen and rogues would be fast asleep."

"I mustn't insist if business stands in the way," said Burnham, "but I really shall be sorry, for your sake, for Nell has invited a charming old-time acquaintance of yours to meet you—Miss Frayston."

"What!" exclaimed Maile, with more animation than he had yet displayed. "You can't mean May Frayston, daughter of Paul Frayston, who—excuse me, you were one of the few who stood by his reputation, and insisted——"

"That he was an honest man, and either the dupe or unsuspecting tool of rogues," said Burnham.

"It did you credit, my dear fellow, and I am heartily glad that his suicide makes it impossible for you ever to be undeceived by any confession he might be obliged to make if he were alive and apprehended. May Frayston! Well, I am astonished. Where did

you find her? I supposed she was in Europe, as governess to old Cashup's children."

"So she was; but Cashup's family has recently returned to America, and taken a place the old man owns two or three miles from our village, and his wife kindly allows May to spend an evening with us once in a while."

"How fortunate for the girl! How is she looking?"

"Handsomer than ever. Any one who doubted the father's character should see how misfortune has improved the daughter. She always was fine looking and brilliant——"

"As scores of sore hearts can testify."

"But the necessity of earning her living and defending her father's name has made her strong as well as sweet. My wife adores her, and I——"

"And you, being your wife's abject slave, as any man would rejoice to be, assist in adoring. Well, I don't wonder. How I wish I might see her!" said Maile, adjusting his glasses and looking across the water, while he assumed a pensive air. Then he looked at his watch and continued, "I must go to dinner with you, my dear fellow, if you won't feel offended at my changing my mind at the mention of Miss Frayston's name. I—no, I mustn't either. It is absolutely necessary that I return to town in time to drift about while men are at their after-dinner chat about the market. Forgive me for changing my mind twice in a minute; I've no doubt you've been a business man long enough to put yourself in my place, and imagine circumstances in which the heart must for an evening make place for the pocket."

"Certainly," replied Burnham.

Half an hour later Maile was hurrying towards New York by rail, and Burnham, entering his own house, was greeted by a wondering look, and, in bated breath, his wife's query—

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"You've been borrowing trouble, after all!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, approaching a brown-clad figure at the piano.

"Ah, Mr. Burnham," said Miss Frayston, arising and greeting her host with a smile and an outstretched hand. "Am I not to have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Maile?"

"From your appearance, I think I am safe in bluntly replying 'no.' The condition of the mining stock market compelled him to return to town."

"May the market be in the same condition whenever he chances to be likely to meet me."

"Why, Nell," said Burnham, turning to his wife, "I thought you invited Miss Frayston supposing——"

"If I didn't blunder once in a while I should be an angel, and then you'd be a widower," replied Mrs. Burnham; "so don't scold me. I never liked Mr. Maile at all, and I wish I could understand why you are so fond of him."

"Miss Frayston," said Burnham, turning from his wife towards the guest, "I beg that when you have been an otherwise model wife for ten years, you won't be so cruel as to assume that your husband is 'so fond' of every man who chances to consume some of his time. Maile was badly wounded during the Civil

War, and insists that his life was saved by a canteen of water I gave him as he lay on the ground, trying to bind his shattered leg so that he should not bleed to death before the surgeon came. In the circumstances, I must believe his regard for me is genuine, so I can't help accepting it. I am sure I never have sought his companionship."

"I'm so glad you have explained," said Mrs. Burnham. "I want my friends to like my husband, but I trembled for you when May gave me one of her looks, as I told her what was the pleasant surprise to which I had invited her, and said—how else was I to say it?—that you were having a day's outing with your friend Mr. Maile."

"Too bad!" sighed Burnham. "If wives only could look at things from a business man's standpoint!"

"Which they never can do until their husbands condescend to talk business with them," said Mrs. Burnham. "I've learned more about Mr. Maile from May in half an hour than you've told me in our ten years of married life, to say nothing of two years of courtship. He's a—a——"

"Sh-h, dear, please," said Miss Frayston, with a warning nod at the impetuous little woman. "I know really nothing about him, Mr. Burnham, except that my father distrusted him, and spoke more severely of him than of any other man in his whole circle of acquaintances."

"There never was a fairer judge of human nature than your father," said Burnham.

"You have always defended his memory so heartily

and nobly!" said the girl, with a wealth of gratitude in her face that made her host feel both humble and happy. "If he could but return to us and speak for himself——"

"Dinner," said Mrs. Burnham, who had left the room for an instant.

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

"My friend Burnham was right in declaring Twinnett's a comfortable place for a party of friends to meet at and chat undisturbed," said Mr. Maile, one clear afternoon early in August, as he pushed his chair slightly back from the table, and assumed an easy after-dinner position.

"I never tasted such splendid soup in my life," said a portly man, as he lighted a cigar and wheeled his chair to command the view from Twinnett's seaward window.

"The fricasseed chicken would have made Delmonico's *chef* wild with envy," said another. "It didn't come in at the customary time, according to well-regulated *menus*, but was none the less welcome as a surprise."

"I wouldn't have believed I could have been tempted to try a slice of baked ham," said a third, "but the perfume of the dish was too much for me. I suppose I shall repent of it before morning, but *dum vivimus vivamus*."

"The champagne is old—actually old," said a handsome middle-aged man of rubicund visage. "Nine-tenths of the champagne served in this country is as raw as new punch; this has acquired age, somehow, somewhere."

"Perhaps 'tis as Burnham suggested," remarked Maile, "that Twinnett may be a retired pirate or smuggler, who long ago secured and hid a cargo of wine."

"Long life to him, then, and to us that we may come again and yet again to enjoy the fruits of his labours," said the admirer of the champagne. "I think, too, that we ought to drink Maile's health, in recognition of his public service in discovering such a place."

The toast was drunk, and Mr. Maile arose to respond. Before he began to speak, a self-contained little man near the foot of the table shouted—

"While you're about it, Maile, tell us why you brought us up here? It couldn't have been by accident."

A discourteous laugh went round, and one guest whispered to another—

"Devilish clever that. Maile never was known to do anything for nothing."

"I am very much obliged to the last speaker," said Maile, with an entire self-possession and a bland smile, "for saving me the necessity of making an elaborate introduction. I think we all will understand one another when I say that I selected this place for a bite and a glass, so that we might chat without fear of interruption, or of being overheard by im-

pertinent busy-bodies—chat about our mutual interests in the Frayston claim."

"Ah ha!" "Humph!" "Well!" "So!" and other exclamations were heard in chorus.

"Most of us," continued Maile, "have such a multiplicity of business interests that some of the facts in the case may have escaped some minds. I will rehearse them briefly. Each of us subscribed a certain sum of money, Frayston being authorized to take the whole amount and buy mines from impecunious prospectors in the silver district of Idaho. It was understood verbally that he was to buy them in his own name, put men to work at getting out ore enough to make a good showing, and thus enable us to sell them separately at a handsome profit, or stock them at big figures and put them upon the market."

"Now you're talking!" exclaimed an enthusiastic guest who had taken a great deal of champagne.

"Thanks," said Maile, with a bow. "Frayston succeeded beyond our most sanguine anticipations, as you know—so much so that he sold a single mine, which was little more than a perfect hole, for more than the entire sum contributed, and he divided the money among the contributors, most of whom unwisely gave their verbal release from the remainder of the bargain. In the mean time, he had been preparing the papers for organizing a company which was to take charge of all the remaining property. Suddenly a number of forgeries were traced to him, the nominal makers of the checks being some of the very men who had trusted him to take charge of this enterprise.

Officers went after him to his home at the seaside. He went out one evening alone to take a bath; the officers traced him to his bath-house, found his clothing there, waited patiently for him to return, but he never came. He was undoubtedly drowned, as hundreds of better men have been every season."

"Perhaps," said the self-contained little man at the head of the table.

"I hear but one dissenting voice," said Maile. "None of us suffered financially by the forgeries; the banks that cashed the forged paper were the sole losers. Nevertheless, I think the time has come for us to assert our rights regarding the remaining property. His daughter, the only living member of his family, claims all, by virtue of the terms of her father's will, as you know, and until recently I had supposed we had not a scrap of writing to prove our connection with the enterprise, which had seemed so problematic at the start as to make us prefer to keep our names out of it until there was something encouraging to——"

"'Twas a mere gamble," said the self-contained little man.

"Exactly so. I thank the gentleman for explaining the situation so lucidly," said Maile. "Recently, however, I have come into possession of a bit of paper which I think will be sufficient to establish our claim in any court of law."

"And rob the daughter of her inheritance?" queried the little self-contained man.

"There is no theft in establishing one's rights to one's own," said Maile, with an air of dignity which

compelled the self-contained little man to hide his face in a champagne-glass.

"Good! well said!" exclaimed the man who had praised the fricasseed chicken.

"I move," said the admirer of the old champagne, recovering from an easy attitude and recalling his business manner, "that Mr. Maile be voted full power to open and prosecute suit on the basis of the writing to which he alludes."

"Second the motion," said the guest who had found the soup peculiarly to his taste.

"It is moved and seconded," said Maile, "that I be authorized to sue for our rights in this case. All in favour of the motion will please say 'Aye.'"

"Aye," arose in chorus.

"Contrary will please say 'No.'"

"No," said the self-possessed little man.

"The 'ayes' seem to have it," said Maile, pleasantly. "Does Mr. Tripp desire a rising vote or a written ballot?"

"Mr. Tripp is not a fool," was the reply; "he is too old to be willing to waste time when there is so much about him that is interesting."

"Carried," said Maile; and there was no dissenting voice.

"I think we ought to have some more champagne now that this matter is settled," said the gentleman of the rubicund visage.

"Good!" exclaimed another guest, rapping upon the table with an empty bottle—a signal at which he was emphatically assisted. Twinnett entered in a moment or two, and stood looking on as awkwardly as any old tar called aft for a reprimand.

"Half a dozen more of the same champagne, Captain, if you please," said Maile, resuming his chair.

"There is only one thing about it that troubles me," said one of the guests. "Suppose Frayston should chance to turn up again alive; how would your paper stand then, in the face of what he might say, Mr. Maile?"

"Dead men tell no tales," said Maile, with the air of a man imparting unexpected information; "and no one in his senses can seriously doubt that Frayston is dead. It may have been accidentally, it may have been suicide—I incline to the latter theory; but I ask any or all of you if ever you heard of a man going bathing, disappearing, leaving his clothes behind him, which included his watch, money, business and family papers, and reappearing? If there has been a case of the kind on record, I have failed to see or hear of it. Where would he go? What could he do? He didn't come ashore, for the officers would have caught him. Even had he come ashore, he could not have roamed about the country in a bathing-dress without being arrested by the police or local officials; he could not make his way out to any vessel, for his estate was at the head of a long shoal which extended so far into the Sound that ships gave it a wide berth. But let us ask our host about the probabilities in such a case. Captain Twinnett is an old sailor, and his opinion ought to be of expert quality."

"I'll leave it to the Captain," said the doubter. Just then Twinnett entered with the champagne.

"Captain," said Maile, "you are a seafaring man, whom other men say know all that can be known

about the water and its ways. I'd like to put you a simple question, to decide a difference of opinion in this company of gentlemen. If a man goes bathing alone at the seaside, can't get ashore, has no vessel within five miles or more, and never is seen again, what is any one to suppose became of him?"

The Captain stared—or so it seemed, at least, to the men who gazed upon his smoky goggles. Then he exhibited premonitory symptoms of an earthquake; his waist-band became agitated, from which centre the disturbance moved upward. Finally he burst into laughter, and shouted in a high key—

"He'd be drowned, of course, unless Providence is more tender o' fools than I've ever heerd."

Mr. Maile nodded to one and another about the board, and they signified, by one sort of pantomime or other, that they agreed with him. But he was not going to have any doubt remain to subject him to annoyance afterwards, so he continued—

"But, Captain, some men can swim long distances. Might not such a person as I have described swim far out and catch some passing vessel?"

"Gosh, no!" exclaimed Twinnett. "Some men can keep 'emselves afloat for hours, but as to swimmin' five mile, in this Sound—— By the way, you don't happen to know how the tide was settlin' when the all-fired fool you're talkin' of——"

"The tide was settling in," said Maile, quickly; "that is a matter of sworn testimony."

"He couldn't do anythin' but drown, then," said the lord of the island. "All this talk 'bout men making headway in a runnin' tide, with nothin' but

their own hands an' feet to help 'em, is all bosh. Take my word for it, gentlemen, an' if any of you ever finds I'm mistaken, just come and say so, an' I'll make up any bets he's lost on it. I'm good for any such amount."

"Thanks, Captain," said Maile, filling a glass; "have a glass of wine with us."

The old man stood stolid for a moment; then he said—

"Wine? It's wuss than water to a man o' my bringin' up. If you don't mind, I'll take some straight brandy in the cook-house. Don't be afraid; I'll put it in the bill."

The Captain disappeared in a chorus of laughter. When order was restored, the self-possessed little man said—

"Maile, all this bother and delay would have been saved if you'd only married Frayston's daughter and only heir."

Mr. Maile collected himself quickly, and replied—

"I don't propose to marry merely for the sake of furthering other men's business interests."

"Hurrah!" shouted some one, and Mr. Maile was again toasted.

CHAPTER III.

AN OBJECT-LESSON IN GIRLS.

"HARRY," said Mrs. Burnham, a few days after escaping Mr. Maile as a guest at her dinner-table, "of what are you thinking so earnestly?"

Burnham dropped the newspaper which for half an hour he had pretended to read, paced the shady piazza upon which the couple had been sitting, stopped, and replied—

"Thinking of a charming woman who isn't you. Now, don't you wish you hadn't asked me?"

"I know who it was, then," said Mrs. Burnham, placidly, as she basted together two pieces of a frock for her youngest bud of promise. "It was May Frayston."

"Right—as usual, my dear."

"And what were you thinking?"

"Merely the usual thing—wondering when her wonderful wellspring of hope would run dry, and how the poor girl will endure the shock when at last she is obliged to believe, as all the rest of us do, that her father is dead."

"Don't borrow trouble, Harry. So long as she clings to her belief that her father is alive somewhere, she will be her own dear self. I hope she will continue to believe it as long as she lives. It was hope like hers that kept Lady Franklin alive many years

after everybody else believed her husband had died or been drowned in the Arctic Ocean."

"But it is so ridiculous."

"Nothing is ridiculous that keeps a woman like May in health and spirits."

"But it must end some time, and——"

"Perhaps, but maybe by that time she'll have a husband and children."

"Well, what then?"

"Oh, don't fish for a compliment. You know very well that then, although her heart may ache, she will have close at hand enough balm to heal it."

"I really didn't think that merely to have a husband——"

"I said husband and children," said Mrs. Burnham, holding the little frock at arms' length to observe the general effect.

"Oh, excuse me. I admit that masculine pride is crushed again. But seriously, Nell, do you realize that the girl's hopes have not a single leg to stand on? Of course I echo everything she says about her father, but in my immortal heart I call myself a coward and hypocrite. She attaches a great deal of importance to my opinion, I being a boating man; now, the truth is that as a boating man I cannot see the slightest possibility of her father having got ashore unobserved, or got far enough out to be picked up by any vessel."

"No matter what you can see, or can't," said Mrs. Burnham, dropping the little frock in her lap and shaking her finger impressively at her husband, "don't ever let her see any doubt in you. Let us help her

keep her spirits up; then, if afterwards they must go down, we shall have the comfort of having sustained her to the uttermost."

"But you don't believe the man can still be alive, do you?"

"Indeed I do; with all my heart."

"Give me your reason," said Harry, drawing his chair close to his wife.

"Because May does," said Mrs. Burnham.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Burnham, rising abruptly. "What a reason!"

"It's a woman's reason, but that's sufficient."

"For women—yes."

"You never were a woman, Harry."

"No; I haven't been so fortunate!"

"So you can't understand."

"I am sure I have tried hard enough to understand women," said Burnham, plaintively; "tried for about a dozen years, and under an instructor whom I've fondly imagined the best of her kind."

"The trouble isn't with the instructor; it's in your own stupidity," said Mrs. Burnham, folding the little frock on her knee.

"Speak of the dev—of angels, I mean," said Harry, "and wings——"

"I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, following the direction of her husband's eye to the road beside the house, "as sure as I am alive, it's May Frayston."

Husband and wife hurried to the gate and greeted the visitor, who said—

"The entire family has gone to a funeral—Heaven

rest the dead for his kindness to me—and as there are still two or three hours of daylight, I came over to ask whether you didn't want to take me out for an hour or two in your boat. I've not been on the water in a month."

"Bless you for an excuse to get Nell out for a sail," said Harry. "We'll sail until the wind goes down, then we'll go ashore at Twinnett's, and eat with grateful appetites whatsoever the old man chances to have in store. Then, if the wind goes down, as it usually does at sunset, I'll tow the boat back with the dingy. Both of us will see you home by train, unless you will go with us."

"Which of course she will, stupid," said Mrs. Burnham.

"Don't scold him, Nell," said Miss Frayston, "after he's prepared such a pleasant programme for me—just such a one, in fact, as I'd elaborated on the way."

"Great minds think alike," said Burnham, hurrying away to get into boating-garments. The ladies followed his example, and within half an hour the trio were on Burnham's tiny yacht, the *Miss Nell*, and beating down Long Island Sound. Soon, however, the ladies wearied of moving to windward whenever the boat went about, and, at Mr. Burnham's suggestion, they ran before the wind back to Twinnett's. As they worked into leeward of the little dock, Twinnett came down and took the yacht's painter.

"What can you do for three good appetites, Captain?" asked Burnham.

"Whatever the ladies think best, sir," said the old man, touching his hat.

"A chicken salad, sprinkled with chopped egg, and served with fresh mayonaise," said Miss Frayston, "would be very nice."

"You shall have it," said the Captain, assisting the young woman to ascend the slippery steps of the dock, while Burnham whispered to his wife that having had a father who was a good amateur cook seemed to have made that girl believe that any man could do anything.

While the supper was preparing, the trio sat on the little piazza of the old man's hut, but soon the wind drove them indoors. Then Miss Frayston playfully rearranged the rude ornaments of the room, until Mrs. Burnham whispered to her husband that a day's rest from the Cashup children seemed to lift a load from that dear girl's spirits. Miss Frayston even twined some conch shells so they would retain water, and filled them with golden rod, which she gathered within a few feet of the hut. While she still was gathering flowers, the Captain entered with raw oysters, looked around, and said—

"Thought there was three of ye?"

"I'll pay for any damage she does," said Burnham, pointing out the doorway at May.

The Captain walked gravely out, touched the young woman on the shoulder, and said, "Supper's ready, ma'am."

"Oh, thank you, Captain," said Miss Frayston, taking the old man's arm, although Burnham would not be sure that it had been offered. No sooner was the girl seated and the Captain gone, than Mrs. Burnham exclaimed—

"You dreadful girl! To flirt with a man old enough to be your grandfather!"

"He isn't either; and I'm sure he looks more manly than any young man of my acquaintance," said Miss Frayston, gaily. Then she continued, "I'll warrant he'll make that salad unfit to look at, much less to eat. I've a great mind to go and give him some directions. I declare I will."

"May!" exclaimed Burnham, as the young woman dashed towards the kitchen.

"Harry," whispered Mrs. Burnham, with a warning pinch, "do let her alone. She seldom has a day's outing with old friends, and where she can feel free to do as she likes without any one nigh who can make remarks or tell stories. Do remember what it must be to her to forget for a few moments the load that is on her heart."

"I'm a beast, my dear," said Burnham, humbly.

"Not so bad as that; merely a goose. Mercy! do hear the girl!"

"You shouldn't chop the eggs until they are cold," came May's voice from the kitchen. "Besides, they've not been boiled long enough. They should be powdery, not leathery. If you don't do better, Captain, I won't dare to risk any digestion on the island again."

"Do hear her go on!" gasped Mrs. Burnham.

"Do let her alone," said Harry, returning the pinch and remark of a moment or two before. "She seldom has an outing with old friends, and where——"

"Sh-h-h!"

In came the Captain, with a red face and visible

chuckle, bearing a dish of salad, while behind him came May Frayston, with a merry smile and three plates.

"There's nothing like learning in time," said she, as she placed the plates on the table. "I may yet have to marry a restaurant-keeper to be sure of enough to eat, and 'twill be so useful to know how to wait at table."

"The man who marries you, young woman," said the old sailor, standing apart and surveying the girl through his smoked glass goggles, "will lose his business along o' looking at his lovely wife."

After this gallant speech, the Captain departed with sailor-like abruptness, and Miss Frayston proceeded to serve the salad as composedly as if she were the giver of the feast instead of the guest. Soon afterward the Captain entered with an immense platter of roast oysters, which Miss Frayston declared were of all things what she would most like, and the Captain replied that he was glad to know that, although an old man, he still knew how to please young women.

After supper the party sat a little while on the piazza, exchanging leisurely remarks about the effect of the rising moon on the water, and the odd but not unpleasant noises made by the water about the rocks, dock, and boat. Then the Captain came out and volunteered some weather wisdom, and patiently answered a lot of landsmen's questions which must have seemed very silly to a weather-beaten seaman, and Miss Frayston asked many questions which seemed silly even to Burnham and his wife, though the Captain laughed good-naturedly at all of them.

Finally the trio departed, the Captain gallantly handing the ladies down while Burnham held the boat's bow against the dock.

There chanced to be a gentle breeze to waft the party homeward—so gentle was it that Burnham gave his eyes less to the course of the boat than to his guest, who sat so quiet, looking backward at Twinnett's Island, that her face in the moonlight looked like marble. When all were at home and had retired, Burnham murmured, close to his wife's ear—

"I never knew a more variable creature—not even when I was courting you."

"Don't be silly, Harry. Hasn't the poor dear girl a right to her moods?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, but what?"

"But she never acted so impulsively at our house, well as she knows us. What can have possessed her?"

"Any one of a hundred things. Maybe she was trying to forget. Maybe she had a wild fancy that the Captain, being a sailor, might help her find her father. There's no knowing what may come into the head of a girl whose heart has had so much trouble."

"If the old fellow can give her any hope, I wish I might be he," said Burnham. "Of one thing I am absolutely sure—all that mischief-making of hers was not mere accident."

"That's just like a man," said Mrs. Burnham. "Nobody can do anything in the world without some deep-laid purpose. Goodness! if I'd had an idea that you were so curious and suspicious, I never would have dared marry you."

"So glad you didn't know it, then, my dear; but I don't propose to change my mind about this evening's occurrence. I shan't be surprised to hear of anything —even to hear of May marrying the Captain suddenly, for the sole purpose of having him search the whole maritime world for news of her father."

"You goose!" drawled Mrs. Burnham, sleepily.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE BUSINESS.

AFTER the Burnhams and their guest had left the island, Captain Twinnett leaned against the scrubby sassafras tree and followed them with his eyes until the disappearance of the white sail from the moonlit view, and the rattle of an anchor-chain paying out rapidly, notified him that the little yacht had reached its moorings near the town. Then the old man sighed, and softly sang in a throaty baritone a verse from an old Methodist hymn:

> "Shall I be carried to the skies
> On flow'ry beds of ease,
> While others fight to win the prize,
> And sail through bloody seas?"

"Ah!" he sighed again, as he sauntered back to his hut, "it's a blessing, once in a while, to see people who are all they pretend to be, and aren't hurrying to the devil in search of money they're not entitled to, and that won't do 'em any good if they get it."

He reached the hut, and was about to enter, when

his ear caught a familiar sound on the water in front—it was a combination of the throb and hiss of the engine of a steam-launch. He looked intently for a moment; then his musical impulse broke forth in a new vein, as he went down to the little dock to look at the little craft which was rapidly approaching the island. He parted his lips, and softly whistled Gilbert's "Pirate King."

"'I'm as mild-mannered a man as e'er scuttled a ship,'" quoted he to himself, "but if I remember that voice rightly, the crowd will rather have met a pirate than me by the time I get through with their pockets."

Evidently this warning was unheard on the launch, for the little craft rapidly neared the island, and finally crept under the lee of the dock. As the occupants came ashore, they saw Captain Twinnett, hands in pockets, and a placid stare beaming from his smoked glass goggles.

"Captain," said Mr. Maile, who headed the party, "we don't deserve anything, having arrived without notice, but if you have a mouthful of anything to eat——"

"Or drink," suggested one of the party.

"Or to drink," continued Maile, "we will be your most grateful debtors, even after paying our score."

"Might give ye a clam-bake," said the Captain, reflectively, as he looked from one to another, as if to identify the party, "if ye ain't in a hurry—a clam-bake, with spring chicken done on the top of the heap, and some green corn."

"The very thing; we'll wait," said Maile. "Eh, gentlemen?"

"Certainly; if there's any more of that old champagne we had last time we were here," said one.

While Twinnett began to prepare the feast, the party strolled about the little island, Mr. Maile first dropping into the dining-room, and then into the other rooms, even visiting the kitchen and climbing to the loft which was the Captain's own chamber. When at last he rejoined the party, he said—

"There are no other people on the island, so, while our host is busy, and the men on the launch are under our eye and not within listening distance, we can do our talking undisturbed."

"Infernal shame we had to come so far from home to do it," growled the man who wanted the old champagne.

"You'll think otherwise after supper," said Maile, soothingly. "You know how often walls have ears in New York. Briggs lost the Nettie Q mine by talking to Jenkins about it while having his boots blacked, with no one else but the Italian polisher within hearing, and 'twas a restaurant waiter who gave away the Blue Creek lumber combination scheme."

"Yes," said the self-contained little man who had sat at the foot of the table during the previous visit, "this world has become so infernally sordid that a smart rascal never knows whom to trust."

"Eh?" growled the admirer of the old champagne. "Doesn't it strike you that you are becoming offensively personal?"

"Nonsense, my dear sir," said Maile, quickly. "On the contrary, he is quite complimentary. He said

'smart' rascal. Who wouldn't endure any hard name for the sake of being called smart?"

"Eh? well, I suppose——" and the gentleman who was waiting for the old champagne smoothed the ruffled plumage of his soul, and looked inquiringly toward the great flat rock on which the Captain's outdoor fire was already blazing, and from around which the Captain's own figure cast grotesque shadows in every direction.

"Well, Maile," said the self-contained little man, after the party had disposed itself comfortably in the chairs and hammocks on the Captain's piazza, "salt air and good appetites have made us savage enough to do anything, so out with your villainy, whatever it is; we may have more conscience after supper, you know."

"My dear friend," said Maile, "I'm again under obligations to your playful spirit for enabling me to proceed to business without a formal introduction. At our last meeting, all the gentlemen present were so kind as to entrust to me the work of securing for ourselves the properties which Frayston left in a condition of uncertainty as to ownership."

"There was nothing uncertain about the titles all being in his own name," said the little man.

"Quite true; but, as you know, they were originally bought with our money, and until Frayston's death is legally proved they can't go to his heir; and, as I happen to know, on the best of authority, that she is doing nothing to comply with the terms of the law as to working the claims, they will in time revert to the public, in which case nobody will get anything. The

heir can do nothing, for she has no money ; we can do all necessary, so we should take them."

"Money tells," said the champagne-lover, raising his expansive shoulders.

"Yes—it tells a lot of infernal lies sometimes," said the little man. "Go on, Maile ; excuse my interruption, please."

"Thanks for your courtesy," said Maile. "What else I have to say requires but little time ; when it is said, I'll go down the dock so that I can't hear any of the uncomplimentary things some of you may want to say about me while discussing my proposition, which is this. Money will be required to put this business through. You know how we all dislike sudden assessments ; every man in business, especially in stocks, has daily use for his entire bank balance. I therefore offer to assume the entire expense, secure the property, and sell piecemeal to whoever will pay most, expecting you all to look into each sale before final transfer, to avoid complaint afterward. For my outlay and services I want twenty-five per cent. of the entire amount received. There is the whole story. Now I will retire, to give you an opportunity to——"

"Here! come back, Maile!" exclaimed the devotee of champagne, as the maker of the proposition started from the piazza. "I don't believe any one will object to your terms. I, for one, don't want to be assessed, or have to listen to reports or court proceedings, or be rung up by telephone to answer questions, or be run down at theatre, or club, or house for advice."

"Nor I," said two or three others in chorus.

"I think I hate, as badly as any of you, whatever business is likely to hang by the eyelids whenever you expect it to drop into your hands," said the little man, "but I can't—on an empty stomach—swallow the idea of leaving the orphan entirely out of our calculations. While the property stands in her father's name, she has rights which——"

"Bosh!" exclaimed the connoisseur in champagne, with an impatience which implied thirst. "Let Maile marry her and give her the benefit of his quarter. I don't see what could be fairer."

"Mr. Maile," said that gentleman in person, with a low bow, "will be very glad to do so if he can. Any one should be delighted to resign his fortune for the opportunity to win so charming a woman."

"Well, I'll be ——," remarked the little man, blowing an immense cloud of cigar-smoke, yet retaining enough to throw him into a violent fit of coughing.

"I doubt it, on general principles," said Maile, pleasantly. "Beside, I don't believe in eternal punishment."

"I don't see how any one can," said the little man, after a concluding cough, "after he's been in business for years as a mining shark."

"Now that we're through, I wish the supper would come," said the champagne-drinker. "Isn't the old man awfully slow?"

"Where is he?" asked Maile, with a start.

"Don't be frightened," said the little man. "'The wicked flee when no man pursueth'—I think that's the way it read when I went to Sunday school. There he goes now, toward the fire, with an immense

platter in his hands. You can't suspect that old lubber of being a listener."

"I can suspect anybody—except present company," said Maile, so savagely that the party seemed startled; "and, by the way, there'll be time before supper, I'm sure, to put our agreement of this evening into writing; 'twill require very few lines." So saying, Maile entered the dining-room, took writing-materials from his pocket, scribbled a few lines, called his associates, and secured their signatures.

"I suppose," said Maile, thoughtfully, as the Captain entered with a platter piled high with roasted clams, "these signatures ought to be witnessed."

"All right; anything, so we can begin supper," said he with a fondness for champagne. "Let our host do it; we'll always know where to find him if he is wanted."

"He'll answer as well as any one," said Maile, folding the paper so only the signatures were visible. "Captain Twinnett, will you kindly witness the signatures of these gentleman? Right here, over the word 'witness.'"

The Captain rolled awkwardly around to where Maile stood, looked at the signatures closely, as if they embodied some important information, rubbed the outside of his goggles with a yellow silk handkerchief, took the pen from Maile as if it were an axe or oar, and said—

"So's to have everythin' in ship-shape, gentleman, I'll ax you all around, is these names on this round robin your own writin' without fear or favour? I b'lieve that's the way it's usually axed?"

All spoke or nodded assent.

"Then," said the old man, dipping the pen in ink as if it were a scoop-net, "I'll ax you further to excuse me for puttin' down my name with my left hand, which ain't over-handy, but my right won't work." Then he laboriously scrawled "Falias Twinnett," no two letters being joined, and a period being dotted after each letter.

"Capital!" said Maile. "Allow me to congratulate you, Captain, on having a signature that no one would counterfeit."

"Now let's have some of that old champagne," said a gentleman already alluded to, as he seated himself and piled a plate high with clams, which were quickly resolved into shells.

"Right away, sir," said Twinnett, rolling out of the room. "Got a whole dozen on ice."

"Put on another!" roared the devotee of the exhilarating beverage.

The feast was not long, for the guests were very hungry, but it ended in great hilarity, the biggest laugh coming at the last, when the Captain gravely insisted on helping Maile, who had drunk least, down to the boat lest he should lose his footing. As the launch steamed away, the Captain's hands sought the hospitable recesses of his trouser-pockets.

"I do wish," mused the Captain aloud, "that some stranger to 'em—some man of the world, would size up that crowd of fellers for me, an' tell me what he thinks of 'em. I'm mighty glad, though, that they appreciated my signature; I've really wondered how it would strike men more used to writin' than sailors and boardin'-house keepers. Umph!"

The old man went slowly up to the house, stopped, turned, removed his goggles, looked at the receding black speck, and continued—

"I always did believe that a hermit could see a good deal of the world if he'd keep good liquor on tap. Yo ho!

> "We'll stand the storm; it won't be long:
> We'll anchor by-and-by,
> And gaily sing as cash we swing,
> 'Oh, how is that for high?'

Seems to me the song didn't end that way when I first heard it, but circumstances alter cases."

CHAPTER V.

QUITE UNEXPECTED.

"NELL," said Harry Burnham one afternoon to his wife, as that little woman was giving to her sitting-room some finishing touches that housewives never trust to servants, "you look as if you were preparing for a funeral instead of a feast."

"My dear husband," said Mrs. Burnham, as she rearranged some *bric-à-brac* so that it might not look as it always had done, "my looks, as usual, are honest. I feel more as if I were going to a funeral than about to receive company."

"Don't give way to such weakness," advised the husband. "You know perfectly well that Maile, however little we may admire him, has irreproachable

manners when in the presence of ladies. I'll warrant that before dinner he'll have interested you so thoroughly in something that he has heard or seen that you might be mistaken for his most ardent admirer."

"That's one thing that provokes me about him," said Mrs. Burnham, placing a vase on the mantel with such vigour that it was no longer a vase. "He is so entertaining, when he tries, that almost any one believes him, against what better sense teaches—and what his face teaches too—a gentleman in thought and feeling. If he can appear this way to me, who have——"

"Who have been for years the close associate of a gentleman in deed and in truth, I suppose you were about to say?"

"Who have heard so many dreadful things about most men as to know that manners don't make the man," continued Mrs. Burnham, with a saucy toss of her head, "how must they affect an inexperienced girl like May Frayston? And how do you suppose, after all she has said of him, and suspects him of, she can have asked me, out-and-out, to invite him to dinner, and have her here to meet him? You know how she spoke of him not a month ago—that dreadful, blessed day when you escaped bringing him home."

"'Rum creeturs is wimmin;' I can't think of any other explanation, my dear."

"I can," said Mrs. Burnham, taking the attitude of one who has something startling to impart. "I believe the girl has brooded so long over her troubles, having

no friend to speak to more than once a week, that her mind is weakening."

"Pshaw! It's more likely that, in the greatness of her heart—which must be great, she being her father's daughter, she feels her dislike and suspicion of Maile is unreasonable, and she has adopted this way of repenting. There is no weakness in that sort of thing; it is strength."

"She couldn't be anxious to meet him—really anxious——"

"We shall have to conclude the debate at some other time," said Burnham, rising as a carriage drove up to the door, and Maile entered the house.

It was just as the host had prophesied. Within ten minutes Mrs. Burnham was listening to Maile as intently as if he were her dearest friend—so intently, indeed, that May Frayston's approach was unnoticed until the lady herself entered the room and greeted the party, bestowing upon Maile a smile which Burnham afterwards declared was simply bewitching. As the hostess led the young woman away to remove the dust of her pedestrian trip from the railway-station, Maile's eyes followed the graceful figure admiringly and Burnham said—

"You must admit, old fellow, that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, whoever was father of that young woman must have been a remarkably fine fellow."

"I'll admit anything good about any one, Satan not excepted, in the presence of that adorable damsel. Beside, I never doubted that her father was a fellow of admirable parts. Bless you, didn't I trust him

myself? What better proof could I give of the esteem in which I held him? I've never underrated his virtues; his single fault is all I blame him for. Other fine fellows have fallen by yielding to a single temptation, you know."

Further discussion of the drowned man's character was prevented by the reappearance of the ladies, and by dinner, which followed shortly after. Throughout the meal Miss Frayston listened pleasantly to all of Maile's chat, and so encouraged her father's enemy whenever he addressed her personally that Maile, in spite of his habitual alertness as to the proprieties, several times found himself almost forgetting the presence of the hostess. Mrs. Burnham's eyes occasionally flashed a quick message at her husband; she did not feel slighted, for she had no mind for anything but amazement. She scarcely could believe her eyes and ears; that her friend should have been playful and in high spirits out at Twinnett's might have been the result of temporary release from care, and of being with trusted friends after days of exile among a stranger's hard-headed children; but here she was, *vis-à-vis* with a man whom she had professed to dislike as her father's enemy, and not only seeming greatly to enjoy his companionship, but almost flirting with him—yes, actually flirting. No one had ever before heard of May Frayston's flirting with any one; she was too sensible and honourable for make-believe love-making.

After dinner, the "mischief," as Mr. Burnham termed it, continued; nothing interrupted it but an occasional remark which courtesy and prudence

compelled the hostess to make. Burnham, called aside for a few moments by a visitor with a village-improvement plan in mind, was soon followed by his wife, who assisted to the full extent of her conversational powers to talk the caller out of the house, so she might again torment her husband with theories and fears. In the mean time, the guests were sufficient society for one another. Miss Frayston chatted bantered, smiled, laughed, and seemed so entirely at her ease and merry that Maile, who, although a sad rascal, was yet a gentleman in his own estimation, found himself incited to his best efforts. Hope dawned in his heart, where only grim resolve had been, and, unromantic though it may seem, the hope of winning a noble woman's love will make a bad man good—at least for the time being.

Suddenly, while they were talking merrily of nothing in particular, and sauntering from one to another of the water-colours which abounded in Burnham's parlour, Maile found himself face to face with a photograph of his companion's vanished father. The situation would have been embarrassing to any other man of omnipresent memory, but Maile looked for an instant, sighed softly, and said—

"As fine a man as I ever knew."

"So kind of you to say so," murmured May.

"On the contrary, it is but the barest justice," said Maile.

"Then why can you believe—as you do?" asked the girl softly.

"I don't believe," Maile replied. "I merely am compelled to listen to what is told, on both sides of

any question. Regarding your honoured father's difficulties, but one side has been heard. I assure you that no one more than I have searched for the other."

"You forget his daughter," suggested May.

"I was speaking only of his friends and acquaintances," said Maile. "His daughter's faith and earnestness have reasons so deep and noble that it would be sacrilege to compare with them the opinions deduced from apparent facts."

"Mr. Burnham never hesitates to assert entire confidence in my father's rectitude; why should you doubt what seems evident to so good a judge of human nature—a man whose opinions of men you are reported to have said are wonderfully shrewd and correct?"

"My only reason is that I cannot explain away—ahem!—what are said to be facts. My dear Miss Frayston, I beg that you will not question me farther; do me the credit to believe that I have feelings like other men, and that it is almost torture to be obliged to differ with you on this subject."

"I do believe it, Mr. Maile," said the girl, with a look so sad yet earnest that Maile felt a twinge of remorse that almost unmanned him; he had not experienced such a sensation before in years.

As May turned her eyes slowly toward her father's picture, her companion looked at her and thought rapidly. To him, a man of acute mentality, with no higher feeling than patience or contempt for the ordinary weaknesses of the feminine mind, May Frayston had always seemed superior to all other members of her sex. She was not a beauty, but her grace and self-

command made her charming, merely as a woman. She had been her father's companion for years, and been educated to the full extent of that versatile man's ability. She had refused several offers of marriage while her father was alive and prosperous, explaining that she preferred to care only for her living parent. Now, however, might she not be persuaded to think differently?

But who and what was he who was longing to win her heart? The man who had been most instrumental in hounding her father out of existence, and who even now was endeavouring to wrest the dead man's property from the daughter's uncertain grasp. There came unbidden to his mind the scene in Richard III., where Gloucester wooed Lady Ann, whose husband he had recently slain. At the same instant an angry flush came to his cheek, and he determined to destroy his copy of Shakespeare.

What could he do? May Frayston never before seemed so womanly and noble as she stood there silently worshipping her father's face. Like many another man of doubtful business morality, Maile was quite fastidious as to his associations out of business hours. After this woman, there could be no other in the world for him. But, were he to propose, and be accepted, how could he continue his work of securing the Frayston mining property for the men with whom he had associated in the project? Were he reported as engaged to Miss Frayston, his brother plotters would ruin for ever his business reputation, and perhaps in a court of law make public their compact, which would ruin him in the eyes of his *fiancée*.

May wiped a tear from her cheek, and Maile cast discretion to the winds. He would settle the property question somehow. He had been on both sides of a quarrel before—on both sides at a time. He believed himself the superior in shrewdness of his confederates, otherwise he would not have consorted with them. In one way or other he would secure the lion's share of the property; if he did so, and married the orphan, would she not indirectly receive her own in the end? She need not know of the tortuous ways by which it had come to her. Besides, might not the girl's own claim be made so strong that it could not be disproved? He had devised evidence before; he thought he could do so again, with such a prize in view.

"Miss Frayston," said he, with a show of emotion which he took great satisfaction in knowing was honest. It so impressed the girl that she turned toward him with a startled look.

"Miss Frayston," he repeated, taking the girl's hand, "if you will allow, I will prove my faith in your father by doing what no one else has been able to do—by securing for you the property of which your late father died possessed. The task will not be easy, for his old associates are determined—almost vindictive."

"Mr. Maile!"

"You seem astonished, which is not unnatural; but I beg you to believe me sincere."

"I must accept your word, Mr. Maile; but my limited means will not allow——"

"You shall be put to no outlay whatever. I will venture my own entire fortune, such as it is, in the

work, if—if you will allow me to hope that afterwards I may be more to you than an acquaintance—more even than a dear friend."

The girl's eyes fell ; she was silent for a moment or two, but she did not withdraw her hand. Finally she said—

"Mr. Maile, I had no thought that—— I can only say that the man who will restore my father's property and reputation shall have my entire heart."

"That assurance is sufficient—for the present," said Maile, courteously, raising the girl's hand as he bowed to kiss it. Mrs. Burnham, who had entered the adjoining room, saw the salutation, and hurried away with pale face and wondering eye to tell her husband.

As Maile returned to the city, he murmured to himself. "Was there ever a happier man—or greater scoundrel ?"

CHAPTER VI.

"DOWN FINE."

POINT REACH, of which Twinnett's Island was a geographical dependency, was a town twice as far back in the ages as its oldest inhabitant could remember. It had long been one of the rural butts of sarcastic people in the city near by, and even when some of these people afterwards discovered, to their benefit, that the long slope on the outskirts of Point Reach was unequalled as a site for suburban resi-

dences, they still alluded to the village proper as a stupid hole, and to the natives as a lot of fossils.

The natives resented both these allegations. The town had been good enough for half a dozen generations of their ancestors, as a well-filled cemetery could testify. As for the inhabitants, was there a set of people in the United States who more persistently hungered and thirsted for information? The natives doubted it. From morning until night, and as far into the night as any place of general resort was open, able-bodied men would be found at the post-office, the house of the local fire-engine company, the shops, stores, and mills, the barber-shops and bars, the railway station, and the steamboat-landing, intent only on increasing their stores of knowledge. True, the information sought was generally of a personal nature, but knowledge is by every one regarded as largely dependent upon natural taste and impulse, else why do even the highest universities provide for "elective" course of study? "The noblest study of mankind is man," and the natives of Point Reach pursued it with a degree of earnestness which always is inherent in true nobility of nature. So devoted were they to their special study, that they never rested from their labours regarding any one person until, to use their own favourite expression, they had "got him down fine." They did not ignore facts, but, on the other hand, they were not mere absorbers of ready-made information, like children at school; their reason and imagination were always equal to the task of connecting parted links in imperfect chains, and, like great students in all other departments of socio-

logy, they often were better satisfied with a large and brilliant theory than a tiny and bald fact.

Captain Twinnett was for a year or two the hardest human problem the natives had ever been called upon to solve. When the old man first occupied the island, and came to town every day or two to sell the fish he had caught, the natives regarded him merely as one fisherman more who had drifted to the town; they also mentioned his name in a guarded way, when oars, rowlocks, bits of rope, and other movable property disappeared from boats between dark and daylight. A little later, when it was learned that Twinnett did not charge anything for bait, for which other fishermen sometimes touched at the island, he was declared a pretty good fellow after all. Soon afterward, when he declined several offers to fish in partnership, he was voted "stuck up," and when he declined to become a member of a yacht's crew, at a season when fishing-business was bad, and yachting paid well, the natives decided that he was too lazy to work on anything smaller than a coasting schooner.

It was all the Captain's fault. If he had answered all questions about himself, he might have set curiosity at rest, but thoughtful men who met him reported that, though he talked a great deal, he never said anything. Any other old fisherman in the village would, at any one's invitation, go into any village bar-room and become stimulated to tell all he knew about himself, and then throw in a great deal more, apparently by way of good measure. But the Captain never accepted invitations to drink, except from the village druggist and the principal grocers,

each of whom kept liquid consolation in his own establishment. He would not even lounge about the polling-place on election day, although he had been a resident long enough to be fully qualified as a voter.

One warm summer morning the Captain rolled slowly up the shady business street, with a string of frost-fish in one hand and a lighted pipe in the other. From many favourite leaning-places in doorways and against trees he was hungrily eyed, not for the sake of the fish, but for himself. One man, who with his eyes followed the old man a long time, strolled to the door of a cigar store, and said to the proprietor—

"The old man's as self-sufficient as a fire-proof safe. I always kind o' suspect these fellows that don't say nothin' to nobody, an' act as if their own company was a good deal better than anybody else's."

"He's a good judge of cigars, anyway," said the dealer, judiciously. "He bought a box of imported Perfectos of me the other day; wouldn't touch the domestic article at any price, though they're good enough for some rich men in this town."

"Well, now," said the lounger, with a look meant to be searching, "how any man that ain't nothin' but a fisherman can afford to smoke imported cigars beats me. I can't smoke any kind of cigars—'less somebody gives 'em to me."

Nobody responded to this hint, and the lounger looked despondent.

"He's took his fish into the drug store, an' gone behind the prescription-desk," said another lounger, who had sauntered down the street and joined the

first two. Then all three thought silently for a moment, but apparently could deduce nothing new from the new testimony adduced. Meanwhile, the spectacle of three men standing together—in front of a cigar store, too, where some one might be moved to "stand treat," soon attracted other loungers, one at a time, until there was a gathering large enough to discuss anybody's character without relapsing into periods of silence.

"I don't believe there's anything more or less to that old chap except that he's a good restaurant-keeper, and would rather serve a big party once in a while, at a good price, than supply cheap meals in town, in competition with two or three restaurants and boarding-houses, to say nothing of the hotel."

This remark, from the sexton of Bethesda Church, who had himself been a sailor, had apparent weight with most of the party; but one doubter replied—

"Cap'n Holly, you don't believe he makes enough that way, in the open season, to keep him alive all winter, do you? Why, he laid in eight ton of coal last winter; it takes fire to keep a man warm on a bare rock like that island."

"Must have somethin' to keep him busy in cold weather, or he'd go ravin' mad," said another. "Don't even have nobody to talk to, 'xcept his dog an' cow an' parrot, an' the only one of 'em that answers back can't say much but cuss words."

"I don't see what he can do," remarked a thoughtful-looking man. "Taylor Berry got soaked off the island one day, owin' to gettin' his boat's keel on a rock when the tide was goin' down, an' the old man

took him in an' dried him, an' give him the free run of the place all night an' day, but Tay'l didn't see nothin' but what you can find in almost any shanty along shore, except, maybe, more'n a usual lot of books."

"Ain't much like a sailor, that ain't," said the first doubter.

"'Cause a man's been a sailor ain't no sign he hain't got brains," retorted the sailor sexton.

"'Course it ain't, Cap'n Holly," admitted the doubter; "but how much readin' can a man do through big black goggles?"

"Much as he can of any other kind of work that takes eyesight," the sexton replied, while the owner of the shop nodded his head approvingly.

"P'raps he has to nurse his eyes on account of usin' 'em too much at fine work of one kind or another," said the doubter.

"What kind of work?"

"Well, I ain't chargin' anythin' agin him, but there's lots of counterfeit silver dollars floatin' around, so I've heerd, but nobody ever found out who made 'em, that I've ever heard."

"The idea of an old sailor being a counterfeiter," sneered the sexton.

"Maybe he ain't no sailor after all," said the doubter. "I always thought his hands were mighty small for a sailor. He's comin' this way now—just notice his hands as he comes along."

The crowd parted as the old man approached; as it drifted together again, the doubter looked inquiringly from one to another, and three of the

party admitted that Twinnett's hands certainly were small.

"My notion about him," said one of the party, "is that his fishin' and his sellin' meals is all a blind, an' that what he's doin' here is huntin' for buried treasure."

"Don't give us the Captain Kidd story," begged the cigar-dealer.

"Cap'n Kidd ain't the only pirate that ever came into the Sound. Pirates an' privateers an' smugglers was pretty much alike not so many years ago, an' sailors hear lots of such things from other sailors, in one place an' another. Besides, lots of folks had to run away from this county in Revolutionary times, an' if they struck the Sound an' found soldiers an' sailors aroun', their safest game was to bury their money or silver. Ain't that so, Cap'n Holly?"

"Ye—es," drawled the sexton, yet with some doubt and mental reservation in his voice.

"Money and silver teapots has been found in the sand along here sometimes, so I've heard," continued the thoughtful man.

"Any man would be a fool to hunt for more of 'em," said the sexton.

"Any man can be a fool," suggested the owner of the shop, "who would waste time in digging for other men's leavings, unless—this is important, gentlemen—unless he is well enough off to smoke imported Perfectos; in that case, he can afford to use his spare time in any way that doesn't cost him anything but his time."

"I saw him," said one of the party—"I saw him

diggin' in the beach just after sundown, only a few nights ago. He didn't 'spose there was anybody round, I guess, for the tide was runnin' out, an' no fish was a-bitin', but I'd been floatin' around, waitin' for a couple of New York fellers that had hired me to take 'em ashore from a ledge. So I saw him—saw him with my very eyes."

"Have a cigar?" said the doubter. "Let's all have a cigar. Six for a quarter." This last remark was delivered in a whisper to the owner of the shop.

"So that's the sort of a fool the old man is, eh?" said the doubter, after all the cigars had been lighted, and the atmosphere of the shop resembled that of a city kitchen after the cook has thrown the waste leaves of a cabbage into the fire. "Well, I'm glad to know it. I don't wish no harm to nobody, but I knowed there must be somethin' wrong or silly about a man that would live on a desert island all summer, an' not go away from it in winter, when everythin's all froze up."

"Has any of the jewellers in town had him come in to them with old coins or silver ware?" asked the thoughtful man.

"There ain't one of 'em," said the doubter, "who'd know silver from pewter if he see 'em both bilin' before him. I'm willin' to let it go at that; old Twinnett ain't anythin' but a hunter for what he thinks somebody else has hid away."

As no other theories suggested themselves, and there seemed no likelihood that any one else would treat to cigars, the party dispersed. The proprietor

of the shop, however, paced his floor as soon as he was alone, and muttered to himself—

"Treasure-hunter, eh? And buys Perfectos by the box! Umph! I wonder if there isn't some way for me to stand in with him?"

CHAPTER VII.

SOME OPERATIONS IN SAND.

THE suggestion that Captain Twinnett was a fortune-hunter, and had established himself at the island, in the vicinity of Point Reach, for the purpose of searching the sands for treasure buried by Captain Kidd, or somebody else, sank deep into the heart of the owner of the cigar store in front of whose place the incidents last recorded in this story occurred.

"Findings is keepings," he said to himself in the shop one day. "Whatever was hidden, long years ago, by any old pirate, or Tory, or rebel, is as much mine as Twinnett's. If it's all right for him to dig for it, it's all right for me. To do the old man justice, I don't suppose he could trace back ownership to the rightful heirs if he were to try, no matter how much money he might be willing to spend. A little find of that sort would go a good way with me; there isn't much of a living to be made in a town where scarcely anybody buys tobacco or cigars but the cheapest."

The cigar-dealer gave the subject a great deal of

thought for several days; finally, one night, when the moon shone brightly and the tide was running out, he went to the water after closing his store, and went out in an old row-boat. The time, as he knew, was appropriate for a quiet reconnaissance, for neither practical fishermen nor romantic lovers were likely to be out boating while the tide was low, for the little harbour was muddy, and a tortuous channel had to be followed before the open Sound could be reached. The cigar-dealer made his way slowly out, grounding once in a while, in spite of his care, so he heard the church clock strike eleven by the time he reached deep water. He rested on his oars a moment, and then growled to himself—

"There's no fool like an old fool. I wonder if any man ever went on such a wild goose-chase before? It seemed likely enough while I was mooning over the trip by daylight, but it doesn't look the same way under the moon at night. Wonder what my wife would say, if she were to know about it, and take a peep inside my mind? There's no reason why Twinnett, if he *is* a treasure-seeker, should come ashore to-night any more than any other time. It's only one night of scores in which he could operate, if he's doing anything of that sort. I declare, there's a light on his island now; like as not, he's got a party of city people there for a clam-bake or something. I'm a fool. I'll go home. No, I won't, either."

The sudden change of opinion was caused by the appearance of a black speck on the water, a mile or more away, and near Twinnett's Island. The longer the merchant looked at it the surer he was that it was

a boat, and that it contained a single figure, who was rowing.

"Coming this way; there can't be any doubt about it," said the cigar-vender to himself. "Maybe it's some other man than Twinnett, but I don't see how that's likely. He don't encourage evening calls, unless they mean business, and no man is likely to pull over there alone in a row-boat, just to get a supper that would make him feel uncomfortable while pulling back."

The dealer strained his eyes two or three minutes longer, and remarked to himself—

"Coming ashore; there's no doubt about it. Coming almost straight for me, too. He mustn't see me, or my game is up. Confound it! there's no way of hiding the boat on this beach, though. I might put myself under some of the bushes on top of the overhang of the cliff."

The dealer thought rapidly for a moment; then he backed his boat, handling the oars carefully, so they should be noiseless in the row-locks. Keeping his eye on the other boat, he backed all the way into the channel of the harbour; then he put his craft ashore in the mud behind a little point, and sprang out with the painter and anchor in his hands. The anchor was a stone weighing fifteen or twenty pounds; the ground upon which the bearer sprang seemed soft all the way down to the centre of the earth, so when dry land was at last reached, the tobacconist muttered—

"I ought to find something, if only a set of silver teaspoons, to make my expenses, for I've ruined my

second best pair of trousers. I never knew anybody who could wash that mud off of anything."

Industrious use of some clam-shells removed a great deal of dead weight from the nether integuments of the cigar-dealer. The labour was performed behind some bushes growing on top of the little point, and between applications the muddy man kept a sharp eye to seaward; at last he threw away a shell, exclaiming—

"Ugh! I feel even now as if I'd set both feet into a pail of glue, or of wall-paper paste. I didn't suppose mud could feel so vile. If something good doesn't happen, I'll be out more money than I've made in a week. I won't have any brains in my head by to-morrow, for one thing, for it begins to look as if this was going to be an all-night job."

The boat from Twinnett's Island had been approaching the shore more closely, and the man with the muddy trousers ceased talking and devoted himself to watching. The boat came closer and closer, and the watcher carefully studied every clump of bushes and every stunted tree, so as to identify the locality in his mind. He even fell back from the little elevation overhanging the beach, and marked two trees which were in direct prolongation of the course which the approaching boat was following. Then he hurried back to the screen of bushes, peered out at the boatman, and whispered to himself—

"It's Twinnett—no doubt about that! I couldn't mistake his clothes and beard. I guess I'm not so much of a fool after all. Strong impressions *do* mean something in this world; I thought I was a

fool after I'd started, but now I think I can afford to change my mind. I'm in luck—perhaps. The idea of striking his very night—his very hour—his very course! The legs of these trousers don't feel as bad as they did. I suppose all explorers and prospectors and fortune-hunters have to put up with some inconveniences. The Argonauts of '49 had lots of them, but they made their pile; at least some of them did. 'Tisn't as bad as Chagres fever—muddy clothes isn't. Guess I'd better drop now; he's nearly here. Thunder!"

The last exclamation was caused by Captain Twinnett suddenly changing his course, just as he neared the beach, by turning sharply and moving eastward, parallel to the general trend of the Sound.

"These breeches' legs have got heavier all of a sudden," said the tobacconist, as he tramped along behind the sheltering bushes, and endeavoured to keep up with the Captain's boat. "Let me see—who used to live here in old times? Perhaps 'twas some of the old Tory families who buried the stuff he's getting out! Yes; come to think of it, this is the old Strompfer estate; the Strompfers were Tories during the Revolution. Well, any property of any family like that couldn't fall into better hands than mine. Didn't one of my ancestors help burn them out of house and home during the war? 'Cowboys' they called the patriot regulators in those days, but they regulated the Tories all the same. Confound that Twinnett! Won't he ever reach the end of his trip?"

The sudden change of subject was caused by the

necessity of floundering through a bay between two small ridges at right angles to the shore. The Captain pulled along on the water, the tobacconist plunged on through the bog, and as the water route was the less impeded, the boatman got quite a start of the landsman. The latter, after escaping from the bog, tramped breathlessly for half an hour to catch up with the Captain's boat, and finally found himself on the borders of the next town, just as Twinnett's boat turned again toward the beach.

"At last!" he gasped. "Four miles from home—tired to death—after midnight—my feet as heavy as if I were wearing a diver's leaden-soled shoes. I'll have to strike it rich to get even with this night's operations. Thank Heaven! he's coming ashore at last."

The Captain's boat was softly beached. Then the Captain slowly got ashore, carrying in one hand a basket and in the other a shovel. The tobacconist dropped softly behind the bushes; there were some stumps on the ground, the results of an apparent clearing away of some of the dwarfed shrubbery, and the points of these stumps did not accommodate themselves to the watcher's anatomy. Nevertheless, it was not a time in which to be particular. The cigar-man was enough excited to drop upon needles, for the sake of what might follow.

The Captain walked a few paces up the beach until he was beside a stunted sassafras tree; then with his shovel he measured twenty-two lengths westward—the watcher carefully counted them. Then, standing against the little cliff, almost where

the tobacconist could touch him, he measured thirteen shovel lengths toward the shore.

The dealer was so wild with excitement that it seemed his heart beats must be audible for a mile. Finally the Captain plunged his shovel into the sand. The tobacconist rose and peered wildly over the bushes. Two or three shovelfuls of sand were cast aside; then suddenly the Captain looked at his shovel, and took from it something which he threw into the basket. The cigar-man sank into a heap behind the bushes, and hoarsely whispered—

"Clams! Why should he have come so far for them?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNEXPECTED.

THERE are moments when facts demonstrate their superiority to theories with a clearness which is simply appalling in its force. Such moments, to the extent of fifteen, befell the tobacconist when Captain Twinnett's search of the beach proved to be only for the humble bivalves without which a clam-bake would be a mere mockery. As he lay on the ground he wriggled about until he found himself on ground comparatively free from protuberance; then he extended himself limply, like a man about to die, and began to free his mind to himself.

"If I wanted to see a man dig clams, did I need to come away off here, sneak around like a thief, spoil

my clothes, lose my sleep? Not much! Why couldn't I have guessed it in the first place? Giving big clam-bags is the old man's special business. He can't keep many at the island, for the shore is steep and rocky. Everybody along the shore here has clam-beds to sell, and he has to look up stock whenever he can get it. Comes for them at night, I suppose, because he is afraid of leaving the island by daylight and losing custom by being away. Oh, what a brainless fool I am! I do believe sticking to buying and selling will make a fool of anybody."

The tobacconist devoted a few moments of recumbency to thought on the general subject. When finally he arose, it was with many starts and at least one involuntary exclamation, for the dampness of the ground had induced stiffness in joints unused to exposure. He turned in several directions without making himself feel more comfortable, and at last he got upon his feet and began to limp away. The utter unprofitableness of the night's proceedings, however, impressed him so forcibly that he stopped, turned around, and shook his fist at the innocent old man who was exhuming clams.

"You old cuss!" he growled to himself; "if you'd only do business like other people, and not have any mystery about you, I wouldn't have lost a night's sleep, a pair of breeches, and a whole lot of hidden treasure that I'd hoped for. I wouldn't even have thought of coming out here in the middle of the night, if it hadn't been for everything that's been said about you. The next time you come to my shop for Perfecto cigars, I'll stick you on a box of domestic imi-

tations and charge you imported price. Even then I won't get even with you on this pair of spoiled trousers."

The Captain was not within listening distance, nor were his eyes turned to the speaker, so the irate spectator continued to free his mind and shake his fist. Suddenly, however, he ceased raving, and exclaimed—

"Great Scott!"

Had the reader been present, he would have seen coming down the beach—the hour being after midnight—a woman in a light grey dress. Captain Twinnett did not see her for some little time, but finally his attention was arrested by a soprano voice singing softly—

"A life on the ocean wave."

Then the old man looked up, and said, "Miss May Frayston, I believe?"

"Quite right, Captain Twinnett, and quite complimentary to your eyesight," responded the lady.

"Make it earsight, young woman, and I'll stand it," said the Captain. "Bless your tender heart! The idea of your walking a mile at midnight, alone, just to see——"

"To see the biggest-hearted man in the world," interrupted the young woman.

"That so? Then I 'spose it's safe to assume that you haven't seen a model *young* man as yet?"

"Don't talk nonsense when you know better," said the young woman. "I'll stop talking nonsense too. Oh, when *is* my father to come back to everybody again? Can't you tell me yet?"

"As soon as it is safe for him to do it, little girl.

You must have patience, and believe that he knows best about the proper time and place."

"I know it and try to believe it; but it's such a big secret to carry, and such a heavy one. Oh dear!"

The Captain dropped his shovel, went to the water's edge, washed his hands carefully, and wiped them on a silk handkerchief taken from some pocket in his clothing. Then he returned to where the girl was standing, tossed his hat aside—his goggles were no longer over his eyes—threw his arms round the girl, and exclaimed—

"Best and most troubled little woman alive, can't you realize that your father is in the best hands possible? Don't you suppose that the only person who is restraining him knows better than any one else when it is safe for him to reappear, and most longs to have that happy day come?"

The cigar-dealer could not hear the response, for the girl buried her head on the old sailor's shoulder; but the next words the listener heard were—

"I knew you would. It would take a whole year o' nights, as they say in the tropics, to explain all I say to you, but you ought to be able to take my word for it."

"Will it be this year?"

"I hope so."

"But are you sure?"

"Nothing's sure but death and the tax-collector, little girl. Every time I come over here, and you slip out of your room at old Cashup's to meet me, I hope and pray and determine that another week shall settle

it all. But impulse is a sort of substitute for common sense, little girl. Try to remember, too, that I'm almost as interested as any one else in the final results."

"To be sure," murmured the girl. "I'm so wretched over the whole business that I'm afraid I think only about myself and my own troubles a good deal of the time. I'll try to be more sensible in the future. But my father—my poor dear father."

"Your father has enough sand in him, young woman," said the Captain, sternly, "to keep from moaning and worrying until the trouble is all over. He's one of the kind"—and the Captain relapsed into sea and along-shore talk—"to not holler till his tooth is pulled. It mebbe looks foolish to do that way, but if anybody *is* goin' to break down in this world, it's best not to do it until there ain't any likelihood of any harm comin' of it."

"Thank you," said the girl. "I'll try to learn the lesson for myself."

"And remember that all the time your father is thinking and working principally on your account, and hardly any for himself?"

"Yes."

"And that better to him—a thousand times better than getting ahead of his enemies—will be the comfort of relieving his daughter from the stain on her family name, and from work that she can't like,—work that, for *her* sake, her father hates worse than she?"

"Yes—yes."

"Are you sure this time?"

"Indeed, yes, and I'm awfully wicked to have been impatient."

"Good! Then let me see you along home. It's too late for you to get any beauty sleep to-night. In fact, I don't think you need any; but I don't believe you'll be equal to old Cashup's children in the morning, unless you have some rest to-night. Come along."

So saying, the old man put his arm around the girl, and conducted her up the beach. The astonished tobacconist followed as closely as he dared. It was a mile walk which the couple took, all the way under the eyes of the cigar-dealer. When the Cashup residence was reached, the old man stood in the shade of a great elm, while the figure in grey tripped noiselessly up to the house. She stopped at the door, and turned and kissed her hand; then the old man turned and slowly strolled down the beach.

As for the tobacconist, he returned to his boat, regardless of obstacles and distance. He had to wet his feet to get aboard, but he used no bad language. He threaded the narrow channel, not yet full, and reached the customary abiding-place of his boat as the clock struck four. Softly he sneaked through the town to his house; when he reached the door, he stopped, raised his hat, and whispered—

"Lord, be merciful unto me a sinner!"

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNHAPPY CHAPERON.

"OH, Harry!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, as she opened some letters at the breakfast-table one morning in early December.

"Well, my dear?" answered the husband, from behind the morning newspaper.

"It's just too dreadful."

"Some one dead?" asked Burnham, after looking and listening in vain for an explanation.

Mrs. Burnham re-read the note which she had held in her hand when she first spoke; then she said—

"No; but I'd almost rather there would be. May Frayston wants us to go to the theatre with her and that dreadful Maile."

"Confound him!" muttered Burnham.

"I wish something or some one would confound him, and all his ways," said Mrs. Burnham, tossing the note aside. "It is bad enough to know that May is accepting his attentions, but for us also to encourage him is a great deal worse. Girls in love may be excused a great deal of blindness regarding human nature—man-nature, but what will people think of us if we seem to countenance that fellow's attentions?"

"We'll have to trust to our previous good character, I suppose," sighed Burnham.

"I've a great mind to say 'No' out and out!" Mrs. Burnham exclaimed.

"Tut, tut, my dear; be loyal."

"Loyal to a girl who's making a dreadful blunder, and who's old enough to know better?"

"No; loyal to an old friend, whom you know is true and right at heart. The worse the blunder she is making, the more she is likely to need her friends, sooner or later. Don't rob her of the most sensible of the lot."

"Thanks," murmured Mrs. Burnham. "What a quiet way you have of wrapping me around your finger!"

"How gracefully you defer to superior wisdom—and experience!" replied Burnham.

"But where is the affair to end?" demanded the wife.

"Not at the altar, I hope," said Burnham. "Trust that girl to see through Maile, in the course of time. He must strike a false note sooner or later; he can't help it."

"And break May's heart?"

"I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you, until I were sure he had enough grip on the heart to break it. May Frayston is no silly girl; she is a mature young woman, with more hard sense than any other woman I know—who isn't married."

"But she seems fond of him, and——"

"If I were he, I shouldn't think her fond."

"Why, Harry, she acts as free with him as if they had been boys and girls together."

"Perhaps. So do I; but you know I don't trust him, or even like him. She was her father's pet and confidante. Perhaps there is some method in her

apparent madness. Maybe she is trying to get some information."

"The idea of a woman going at business in such a way."

"There's nothing strange about it—if it happens to be the only way possible. Do you know, if you were she, I'd expect to see you doing exactly as she does."

"I wouldn't let that fellow make love to me," said Mrs. Burnham, excitedly, "for all the mining property in the world."

"Nor for your dead father's honour either?"

"Oh dear! Well, I suppose we will have to go."

"That's right; I knew you'd be sensible about it. That she wants us as chaperons is of itself a good sign."

"To tell the truth, Harry," said Mrs. Burnham, after a moment of devotion to her coffee-cup, "I don't want to be with that couple more than I can help. 'All the world loves a lover,' and that fellow is so persistently deferential, that I'm mortally afraid I'll lose some of my dislike of him."

"And believe that 'second thoughts are best'?"

"They never are, to a woman, about men."

"Intuition, eh? Well, I'm glad you thought so when you first knew the man who has the honour to be your husband."

"Don't fish for compliments, Harry. I can't think or say anything pleasant whenever this dreadful match comes to my mind."

"Much obliged for the warning," said Burnham. "If I can't have a compliment, at least give me another cup of coffee—and touch the edge of it with your lips."

Then Mrs. Burnham smiled sweetly, and said something too pleasant to put on pale paper with black ink.

The Burnhams went to the play that night, and saw nothing to annoy them in the demeanour of Maile toward Miss Frayston. Indeed, Maile devoted himself almost entirely to Mrs. Burnham, and left May to Harry. The arrangement suited Mrs. Burnham entirely. Rather than see her husband's old comrade tenderly attentive to her dearest friend, she was willing to divert his attention to any extent. So she exerted her conversational powers so industriously that Maile, who was an honest man at least to the extent of heartily respecting an intelligent woman, abandoned himself entirely to the influence of the charming being beside him. Mrs. Burnham was so delighted at her success in keeping the couple apart that she stimulated her wits to the uttermost, and when the curtain fell on the last act of the play, she assured herself that Maile and May had not exchanged a hundred words during the evening.

"I declare," said Maile, looking at his watch as the quartet reached the lobby of the theatre, "it's only half-past ten, and you can't get a train for home until midnight. I feel like a thief."

Mrs. Burnham pinched her husband's arm approvingly.

"I think I know how to kill the time," said Burnham. "Let's have a tiny supper at Delmonico's."

"I always did insist," said Maile, "that Burnham could think of the right thing quicker than any one else, and I almost hated him that he, instead of I, had

this special gift. Nevertheless, let us go to Delmonico's at once."

The suggestion was promptly acted upon, and within ten minutes the party were awaiting a perfect *petit souper* ordered by Burnham. Again Mrs. Burnham monopolized Maile, and had her husband sit beside May Frayston, and talk to her so persistently that Maile had no opportunity to make a single lover-like speech.

With the supper came a bottle of fine Chablis, and when the glasses were filled, Maile said—

"This wine has a rare bouquet. Some toast should be drunk in it—a toast worthy of the wine itself."

"Propose it, Maile," said Burnham.

"Chablis," said Maile, raising his glass and inhaling its fragrance, "is so delicate a wine that, when a toast is drunk in it, it should be given by a woman. Mrs. Burnham, won't you put us under obligations?"

"With all my heart," said the lady, raising her glass. "Here's to the memory of May's dear father; 'Take him for all and all, we shall not look upon his like again.'"

"Quite true," said Burnham, raising his glass to his lips.

"No doubt," assented Maile, emptying his glass in a breath.

As for May Frayston, she raised her glass to her lips, dropped a tear in it, and placed it again upon the table just in time to prevent her trembling hand from spilling it.

"That man at the second table seems greatly

interested in our party," whispered Mrs. Burnham to Maile.

"Rude brute — no manners," murmured Maile, fumbling for his eye-glasses, which he speedily adjusted. "Some men," he continued, fiercely glaring in succession at every person two tables removed, "are so unaccustomed to seeing parties of real ladies and gentlemen, of old and trusted acquaintances, that they——"

"Well, they——?" queried Mrs. Burnham, curiously, for Maile had suddenly discontinued his remarks, and was devoting himself to a salad in front of him.

"That they act like so many stupid curs," whispered Maile, without raising his eyes from the salad.

The supper continued, but Maile's conversational ability flagged. He ate and drank, he recognized all remarks, but only by monosyllables, and he seemed to have gone into a brown study. Within a few moments a waiter brought him a card, from which he read to himself a few pencilled lines, after which his fit of abstraction seemed more pronounced than before. Mrs. Burnham endeavoured to rally him, but all in vain. May Frayston looked at times curiously, but said nothing. Burnham, on the pretence of asking a question of the head waiter, arose and looked carelessly around the large dining-room; then he reseated himself, looked at his watch, and exclaimed—

"How on earth did it come to be nearly a quarter of twelve? We must hurry to our station, unless we are willing to spend the night in New York."

"Shocking place," said Maile, rousing himself, "for

any one accustomed to breathe at night the pure air of the Sound and the Westchester hills. Don't lose your train for anything, I beg."

"Be sure we won't," said Burnham, rising abruptly and placing a wrap on his wife's shoulders. "Beside, I suppose Miss Frayston will want to hurry away from us after an early breakfast, as usual in such cases."

"In that case," said Maile, with a solicitous look at his inamorata, "I shall be cruel enough to myself to hurry you off."

The party went out, escorted by Maile, to a horse-car which ran to the railway station. No sooner had adieus been exchanged, than Mrs. Burnham whispered to her husband—

"Harry, why was he in such a hurry to get rid of us?"

"Business, I suppose. You saw a card handed him?"

"Ugh! the sordid wretch! I hate him more than ever."

"Thanks; my mind is relieved," said Burnham, with mock gravity.

CHAPTER X.

CALLING "TIME."

No sooner had the Burnhams and Miss Frayston started from the door of the dining-room, than Maile found himself face to face with the most impatient member of the syndicate that was expecting to secure the Frayston claims. He was the gentleman who already has been alluded to as a devotee of old champagne.

"Well!" he growled in a threatening tone, while his rubicund visage blazed more redly than ever over his expansive shirt-front.

"Well," Maile replied, with languid politeness.

The red-faced man returned to his table, placed a chair with unnecessary vigour, muttered, "Sit down," seated himself opposite, glared at his *vis-à-vis*, and continued—

"Well, I want to know what's going on. A division of the Frayston claims would be very welcome just now, and some of us have been expecting it, but suddenly I see you, right before my eyes, on the most familiar terms with Frayston's warmest personal friend—that fellow Burnham—and Frayston's own daughter. I don't like the looks of it—hang me if I do, and I want to know what's going on, and what we may expect. We'd have given up all hope and interest in the infernal old claims, if it hadn't been for you; but now that you've started the business

anew, we've a right to expect decent treatment, particularly as we left everything in your hands."

The rubicund man became purple as he talked, and suddenly he stopped and emptied a glass of wine, which had been on the table before him.

"If I may assume that you have concluded," said Maile, "I——"

"But I haven't," growled the rubicund man; "I—I——"

"Allow me to assist you to collect your thoughts," said Maile, entirely at his ease as soon as he saw that his business associate was out of temper. "Waiter, a bottle of Black Seal."

The mere mention of the coming stimulant seemed to confuse the rubicund man's thoughts, instead of collect them.

"Well," he said, as the waiter departed to fill the order, "I don't know that I've much else to say about it. Still, some of us have been talking about the claim, and wondering if it isn't time to get something out of it. There's been a bad market this end of the year—bad for those of us who are on the wrong side—and any little dividend of money received for mines or claims would be quite acceptable."

"I've heard no one else complain," said Maile, blandly, "so I supposed all were satisfied that I was doing all that could be done. I naturally looked for the first grumbling to come from Tripp, so, as he's been as pleasant as a May morning whenever I've met him, I've had no cause to imagine that any one was dissatisfied."

"Well," said the complainant, as the waiter returned

and poured the wine, "I don't say that I'm dissatisfied, but, confound it, what would you think if you'd entrusted some interest to me, and then found me and some of your enemies acting like lifelong friends?"

"I'd think," began Maile, slowly; then he paused to let his companion's glass of champagne do its perfect work.

"Well," said the rubicund man, placing his glass empty on the table, after having first inhaled the aroma an instant.

"I'd think that you had enough sense, shrewdness, and tact to get at the plans of the enemy in the quickest manner, and without taking any information at second hand."

"Eh?" ejaculated the rubicund man, opening his eyes very wide, and his mouth also.

"I'd think," continued Maile, pursuing the advantage he saw he was gaining, "either that you were doing it for some practical purpose, or that you were a fool to be doing it in plain sight, in a place like this, where any man is likely to meet any and everybody he knows. Perhaps, however"—here Maile raised his still untasted glass to his lips—"perhaps you think I'm that kind of fool. If so, allow me to congratulate you on a view which I think all our mutual friends will regard as original."

"Oh, pshaw, Maile," said the complaining stockholder, with a growl intended to be conciliatory, "you needn't take my remarks so savagely. I retract them all, and"—here he refilled his glass—"I drink to your superior wisdom. Now come down from your infernal iceberg of dignity, and tell me something about

the matter—just enough to give me a little encouragement. The market has gone frightfully against me lately, and a little consolation will go a long way with me just now."

Despite admirable command of his features, a new idea flashed over Maile's face so quickly that it would have betrayed him had his companion chanced to be observing him closely. But the warning was unheeded; the man to whom the market had been unkind was contemplating the champagne-bottle with affectionate solicitude, as if wondering how much more consolation could be extracted from it.

"You're welcome to all I know," said Maile, after a moment of thought. "The daughter is doing absolutely nothing to protect her own possible interests, and as for Burnham——"

"Oh, hang them both!" exclaimed the other. "You keep talking as if I suspected you. Haven't I taken back everything I said? I want to know when to expect some returns."

"That's more than I can say. Perfecting our claim is slow work, like all such matters that have any irregularities to be explained to the satisfaction of registrars and courts. The sooner it's settled, the sooner my own mind will be easy, for the delay and outlay is greater than I expected."

"I wish I could sell out," growled the anxious stockholder.

"I'll say the best I can to any purchaser you may be able to find."

"What will you say it's worth?"

"Almost anything—in the course of time."

"Time—yes ; that's what one always has to hear about mines. I don't want to wait for the rest of my natural life ; the money won't do me any good when I'm dead." Then the despondent man brought his fist down on the table with an emphatic thump, as he continued, "Maile, I'd rather get five hundred out of that business to-day, than five hundred thousand ten years from now."

"Allow me to suggest, as a friend," said Maile, "that you're talking like an idiot. I'd buy it of you in a minute——"

"It's yours ; draw your cheque."

"I'd buy it in a minute," resumed Maile, "if it weren't that all the others would begin to imagine that I see more in it than there really is at present."

"Oh, nonsense ! Don't be thin-skinned. Most of the other fellows will sell as cheap as I, I think, unless they're making more than I believe they are. They're all grumbling about hard luck."

"Stupid fellows !" exclaimed Maile, his heart swelling with delight. Then he rested his head on his hand and thought a moment. Finally he said, "If they're so despondent as all that, it seems as if I ought to buy them all out, for my own reputation's sake. Besides, 'twould give me a chance to laugh at them afterward."

"You're welcome to laugh at me, to the end of eternity, if you'll take my share off my hands at five hundred, down."

"Very well," said Maile, filling his glass and sipping it leisurely, to keep up an appearance of calmness, "get me options from all the others, at five hundred

each, and I'll take it all, including yours, and give you an extra five hundred for your work."

"It's a bargain!" exclaimed Maile's associate, an expression of relief driving the bloom from his large visage. "I'll do it to-morrow—during business hours. Be sure to have my cheque ready."

"There'll be no trouble about that," said Maile; "but you'll lose it if you don't be very careful. If they get a notion that I want the stuff, they won't sell it at any price."

"No fear about that; I won't let them think you want it. I'll tell you how I'll work it, Maile; I'll talk so they'll think they're doing something smart in unloading it on you. That's the way I'll work it."

"You're sharper than I thought," said Maile.

"Gracious! a chance to make a thousand just now would sharpen the wits of a stone statue, if he chanced to be on the wrong side of the market. Yes, I'll put it just that way—the whole lot of us are to grumble like fury, not believe you'll ever get the thing in shape to pay us anything, and we're to offer you our interests at five hundred each. It'll be as easy as lying."

"Perhaps," said Maile, with a sneer which he intentionally made as exasperating as possible. "But if the market should happen to turn the least bit in your favour to-morrow morning, I shan't expect to hear from any of you."

"Market be hanged! I've nothing to operate with, if I were let into the biggest thing that's being set up here. I'll write you an option on mine now—this minute, if you want it."

"No need of that. If you're as bad off as you say, I'll trust you to work for the extra five hundred."

"Let's have another bottle," said the lover of champagne, cheerily discounting the future, like all men of his class.

"Not another drop—for me," said Maile, rising. "If I'm to be called on to-morrow for a full five thousand, I must keep my head clear so as to see where the money's to come from. Good night."

"I'll be at your office with those options by two o'clock," said the other operator, as the two men passed into the street. "Don't fail to have my cheque ready."

"It shall be waiting for you. Good night once more."

The couple separated, walking in different directions. After taking a few steps, Maile paused and looked backward at the retreating form of his associate. Then he murmured to himself—

"Saved! Never again will I allow myself to be frightened by any human being. I was a contemptible coward to-night, when I first saw that fellow's black looks. I hope the Burnhams and May didn't notice it. Now, if things turn out as he expects, I'll get the whole property for a song if—well, if there are no interests but mine and May's to consider, it won't matter what has to be done to get full possession. If I've been unfair in any way to the dear girl's father, I'll be in a position to spend a whole lifetime in making atonement to the daughter who was all Frayston had lived for. God bless her!"

As he spoke the last three words, he raised his hat

reverently ; then he replaced it quickly, and resumed his homeward walk, saying to himself—

"A fortune for only five thousand dollars—with peace of mind and a sweet wife thrown in! Hang me! if I don't afterward turn over a new leaf, and be square enough to deserve it all."

CHAPTER XI.

ALL IN THE EARLY MORNING.

"PERHAPS you're ill, Harry?" said Mrs. Burnham one morning, to her lord and master, at the breakfast-table. "If not, what on earth is troubling you this morning? No matter what I talk to you about, you don't seem to hear me."

"You are entirely mistaken, my dear; nobody could help hearing your voice, even if he tried to—at least, not after he had been married to you a long time." Then Burnham pulled himself together with a violent effort, and looked at his wife as if he were expecting an important communication at once. "What have you been talking to me about," he continued, "that I don't seem to have heard?"

"I talked to you about all sorts of things—the children's shoes, and the new stair-carpet, and Mrs. Whatnot's reception, and a lot of other things, and you merely looked in your teacup, or at your plate, and went on eating, as if I weren't within a thousand miles of you. Is our honeymoon over? Have I be-

come a humdrum wife, like a great many others of our neighbours?"

"Oh, nonsense, Nell! Say it all over again now, and I'll promise to listen to every word of it. Go, buy the children all the new shoes they need; buy a new stair-carpet too. Is there anything else? Whose reception is it that you want me to go to, and have been talking about? I hope it isn't some of the usual bores?"

"Well, I will wait and tell you about it when I discover what's the matter with you. What are you thinking about? Something unusual is on your mind this morning. You may as well tell me now, as to have me find it out little by little, in the course of conversation, a day or two hence. 'Life is short, and time is fleeting,' my dear husband."

"Quite true, my dear," said Burnham. "Well, the truth is, I am obliged to give some sort of entertainment to several of my friends, and I want to do something entirely new, as they have been going through the usual society round of dissipation in New York for a few weeks, and for the life of me I don't know how to do it. I don't wish to tax you with it; I know you have enough to do to keep the house going, and look after the children, and rejuvenate your husband when he is going to seed; but it really is a matter of importance to me in business, and I scarcely know what to do."

"Then why don't you entertain them out at Twinnett's?" asked Mrs. Burnham.

"I've thought of that," said the husband; "but I don't know whether the old man is entertaining

people at this season of the year. You know it is winter, and everything is frozen up, and I doubt whether he has anything in store that would answer the purpose. If I thought he had, I would take them over there in an instant, and that would settle the matter to all time."

"Very well," said the wife; "as I have often heard you remark when you don't know about a thing, a good way to find out is to ask. Why don't you go over there and ask him?"

"A ministering angel thou, Mrs. Burnham. I'll do it. I'll do it to-day, in spite of the weather. I ought to be able to find a row-boat; and after I've asked the old man, there'll be that one thing less to think of, in case he can't do it."

"I don't suppose you care to have any one go with you, do you?" said Mrs. Burnham.

"No, I don't know that I do, unless the somebody will be you. Will you go?"

"Will I go? Well, I was merely waiting for an invitation. I've got it now, although rather ungraciously, but I will go."

"Good," said Burnham. "Let us start right after breakfast."

After breakfast the couple went down to the town dock, and after an hour of painful search they discovered a boat. They had very little trouble in finding Captain Twinnett. The old man was walking about, and said he was looking for shade, because the sun was so brilliant. The few sassafras trees that were on the island did not cast much shade by their unleafed boughs, nevertheless he was standing under them.

"Captain," said Mrs. Burnham, "my husband wishes to entertain a party of friends, and he doesn't know whether to bring them over here or not, as everything is frozen up. Can you do anything to help him out of his trouble?"

The Captain went through the motions of shifting a quid of tobacco from one side of his mouth to the other, and then replied—

"Anything that *your* husband wants, Mrs. Burnham, I can do, no matter what it is, if it is in the line of entertainin' anybody. If he wants to get up a dinner for a lot of friends, I can provide it just as well as Delmonico can in New York. Perhaps self-praise is no praise, but I'll stick to my word, an' I'll prove that I'm right about it."

"What have you in stock now, Captain?" asked Burnham, for Burnham had given entertainments before at short notice, at places where the proprietors were entirely certain of their ability to please the public, and had been dreadfully disappointed.

"Well," said the Captain, "I don't mind sayin' that I like good livin' myself, so I've kept everything around here in shape to take care of myself, as nicely as if I was in the best hotel in New York. I've got oysters" (here the Captain smacked his lips), "and lobsters" (another smack of the lips), "and chickens, and fish, and poultry, an' meats that's been well hung, an' game that I s'pose the officials would put me in jail for findin' on my place, if they were smart enough to find it, an' when it comes to other things, well, there ain't any better wines of different kinds to be found in New York than I've got over here."

"Just the thing," murmured Burnham.

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Burnham, "why don't you make your arrangements at once, and appoint this as the place for your friends to come?"

"I don't b'lieve you can do better, Mr. Burnham," said the Captain, "an' I'll prove what I say by the bill I'll give you. If you don't like what I offer you here, you needn't pay a cent, an' I'll bet you the price of a dinner for the whole crowd, down to Delmonico's—I don't care what it costs—that ev'rybody that you bring here will be satisfied by the time he is ready to go away."

"Thank you, Captain, but I don't think any such assurance or guarantee will be necessary. I am entirely willing to take your word about anything, and I'll make the engagement with you at once. We will agree about a *menu* in a few minutes, and meanwhile —by the way, this is a pretty cold day; would you mind letting Mrs. Burnham go indoors and warm herself by any fire that you happen to have on the island?"

"Not at all," said the Captain; "come along. Excuse me; I am an old sailor."

The Captain took the couple indoors and gave them easy-chairs in front of an open fireplace, filled with driftwood that was blazing up most cheerily. He forced glasses of wine upon them, gave Burnham a cigar, and offered the couple a morning paper. The three had just begun to engage in conversation, when the Captain, who, like most seafaring men, was always looking about uneasily at the weather, chanced to cast his eye toward the town, excused himself for a moment, and went to the window.

"I don't get many visitors in winter," said he, "but I declare there seems to be another man tryin' to get over here in a small boat. They say lightnin' never strikes twice in the same place, but the idee of you two comin' here in one day, and another fellow comin' also, is quite astonishin' to the old man. Excuse me, while I take a little more careful look to see who is comin'."

"Certainly, Captain," said Mrs. Burnham; "business is business, and I hope besides, for your sake, that it may be pleasure also."

"Thank you, marm," said the Captain, as he took a strong field-glass from a mantel over the fireplace, and went outside the door for an instant.

"Strangest thing I ever see," said the Captain, returning and seating himself for an instant between the couple; "I've made out that feller that's comin', and unless I'm very much mistaken he's a man named Maile. I know him pretty well; he's been here before, a couple of times."

"Indeed," said Burnham; "then I ought to charge you a commission, for it was I who first made him acquainted with this place. I told him of it one day when he was making a call of two or three hours on me, and wondering where to take some friends to give them a quiet entertainment."

"Is that so?" said the Captain; then he gave a large and expansive wink, and also a heavy chuckle, and replied, "I'll give you your commission, Mr. Burnham; I won't say just when, but I promise you will be satisfied when you get it. But the idea of him comin' over here to-day, in this sort of weather! Why, whenever

I think of that man, I think of him tucked up in a feather bed, an' with all the doors shut around him an' blankets hung agin him, besides, to keep him from hearing anythin' goin' on that could be uncomfortable, and his eye-glasses fastened on. Well, well, well! The idea of his comin' over here on a day like this!"

Both the Burnhams laughed heartily, for they knew Mr. Maile and his peculiarities themselves. Pretty soon, however, they noticed that the Captain was beginning to look serious. Then they saw that he looked at each of them inquiringly, and finally Mrs. Burnham said—

"Captain, what is the matter? Something is troubling you. Speak out at once. You needn't feel the slightest bit delicate about saying to us anything you may choose. You know, we are old acquaintances of yours—at least my husband is, and a man and his wife are one, you know."

"I am ever so much obliged to you, I am sure," said the Captain. "Well, the truth about it is this—that Maile is a queer sort of feller, and I don't know but what he's got some special business with me. If he comes ashore here, would you mind my puttin' you in another room for a little while, so't he don't even know that you're here?"

"Not at all—not at all," said Burnham, quickly.

"Certainly not, Captain," said Mrs. Burnham.

"I'm ever so much obleeged to both of ye, I am sure," said the Captain, arising and leading the way to a side room. "Very well, won't you just come in here a little while?" Here the old man drew aside two bits of sailcloth that covered the space originally

intended for a door. "Right in here," he went on. "It's as comfortable as in the other room, an' though the partition isn't very thick, it can't do any harm for you to hear everything that goes on. As I said before, that fellow Maile is a queer chap, and mebbe you'll be amused. I'd advise you both to listen if you want some fun; unless he is very much of a friend of yours, you'll be amused like enough by what goes on, though I ain't got no more idee what he's comin' out here for than I would have if the man in the moon came down and found a boat somewheres to come ashore. If you'll excuse me now, for just a minute or two," continued the Captain, hurrying away, "I'll see you later."

The couple found themselves in a room, the window of which commanded a view of the little dock into which they had brought their boat; but they were astonished to discover, through the window, the Captain himself drawing the boat around to the other side of the island, and hiding it under a projecting rock.

"What do you suppose is the mystery about this man Maile and the Captain?" asked Mrs. Burnham of her husband.

"No mystery at all, my dear; didn't he say he wished we would listen, and he thought we might be amused by it?"

"Yes, he did," assented Mrs. Burnham; "but really there seems a mystery in the air. I never come to this place, and never hear of any one else coming here, without something unusual occurring. I am really curious about it."

"Then stop talking so loud, for I see Maile's boat is just arriving, and it's quite possible that the Captain will have him in the main room in an instant; do manage to hold your precious tongue."

"What advice to give a woman!" said Mrs. Burnham, with a freezing look.

"Thank you, my dear. I accept the rebuke, if you'll only act according to what I said to you."

"Keep close to your boat here," the couple heard the Captain say to Maile's oarsman, "or you may have trouble; the tide's goin' down very fast, and it's awful hard to get a boat off here when the wind is in shore."

"Tell that to the marines," growled the boatman in a surly manner. "I reckon I know how to take care of a first-class boat like this, without any information from an old sailor that don't know about any kind of boats except them that's kept aboard ship."

"All right, my friend," said the Captain, cheerfully; "I'm always glad to find a man that knows a good deal more than I thought he did. You step right across your boat here, and I'll send you down somethin' to comfort you."

"More mystery," murmured Mrs. Burnham.

"Do be quiet, Nell," said the husband; "they're coming into the house now."

"I will shut myself like an oyster," said Mrs. Burnham. And so she did.

CHAPTER XII.

PARTICULAR BUSINESS.

"CAPTAIN," exclaimed Maile, as the owner of the island led the new arrival into the sitting-room where the fireplace was blazing, "this is the most comfortable place I have seen in several hours! The cars were very cold."

"Thank you, sir," said the Captain, "for sayin' so; I have a notion once in a while myself that it's about as comfortable as any place can be in the winter season."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Maile, shivering and getting closer to the fire in spite of the heavy overcoat which covered him, "I'd no idea the weather was anything like this when I left New York, or I might not have ventured on the expedition. Nevertheless, Captain, I don't hesitate to say that I came up to see you about a delicate matter of business, and one upon which I would like to get your advice and obtain your assistance."

"All right, sir," said the Captain; "I don't know of any better place to come to for advice. I've lots of time on my hands this winter, an' got all my mind to myself. If there's anythin' you know of in which I can be of any use to you, I wish you'd let it right out, freely and confidentially, just as if you were talkin' to a friend. Perhaps you think you don't know me very well, an' I don't know you; but I'm a

pretty good judge o' human nature, an' if I can be any good to you in any particular way, all you've got to do is to command me."

Maile looked at the Captain sharply; but the old man smiled blandly, and finally returned the piercing glance of the visitor with an expansive grin.

"I've no doubt that what you say is entirely true, Captain Twinnett," said the visitor, "and I assure you it takes a great load off my mind. I may as well tell you plainly from the start that I am bothered a great deal about the results of a business meeting that occurred accidentally out here a few months ago, when a few of us came ashore merely on a pleasure-expedition."

"When did that happen, sir?" asked the Captain, looking as innocent as if he had no memory whatever.

"Only a few months ago," said Maile, "the first time, indeed, that I ever came up here, or that you ever saw me. Perhaps you may recall the circumstance. I and a party of friends came up to chat over a little business matter, and before we went away, we drew up a paper requiring a number of signatures which were appended to it right here, and which we asked you to sign and witness."

"Is that so?" asked the Captain. Then he rubbed his forehead, scratched his ear and the top of his head, and went through all the other operations common to men who are trying to recall something to their minds.

At last he was able to look up intelligently, and say, "Yes, sir, I remember it; there was a crowd come out here one day with you, an' you did have

some sort of paper aroun' with you, and with a lot of names to it, and you or somebody else asked me whether I wouldn't sign it as a witness. I remember that I didn't feel very easy about doin' it, not bein' an over-good writer, and my hands being more used to things a good deal less delicate than pens; still, I managed to put my name down. Wasn't no trouble about that, was there, sir?"

As the Captain said this, he looked at his visitor very narrowly and sharply; but, fortunately for him, Maile was looking into the fire instead of observing his host.

"No, nothing particular the matter with it," said Maile, "except that it is lost, and I am afraid that we may have to do it all over again."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Twinnett.

"That may seem all right for you to say, Captain, but I assure you," said Maile, "that it is very annoying to me."

"That's too bad, sir," said the Captain, "as the old sailor said when he found that his grog was seven-eighths water. Well, there's nothing so bad that it can't be made right, I suppose. There's a cure for everything. Can't you find some way of making it right?"

"That's exactly the purpose of my visit," replied Maile. "As you may remember, the paper was drawn up here, signed here, and witnessed here. Well, it is merely an ordinary matter of business, but now that it has disappeared, I don't wish to go before my associates and acknowledge that such is the case. As, however, I remember it entirely—in fact, I have

the rough draft of it in my pocket, which I prepared before we came here on that occasion—it occurred to me that perhaps I might draw the entire paper up again, and if you would not be unwilling to once more witness the signatures."

"Unwillin', sir? Why, if you've got the time to let me clap my name down there in the way that I have to do it, I'd just as lief keep on a doin' it all day if it's any pleasure to a gentleman, or if it gets anybody out of any sort of business trouble of any kind. I've had business troubles of my own in my time, sir, though I may not look like it, and I know how to feel for other folks."

"Thank you, Captain. Spoken like a man! I couldn't help noticing, the first time I was here, that you seemed to be a man above your ordinary line of business and profession; but this country is full of men who have got into business embarrassments of one sort and another—had fortunes and lost them—seen fortunes ahead of them, and not quite got hold of them."

"Splendid! splendid!" exclaimed the Captain, interrupting. "'Pon my word, sir, you're talkin' right in the line of my own experience. But about this 'ere paper, sir; you say you've got it here, an' you want to get my signature again?"

"That's what I came for," said Maile; "and here's the document;" saying which, he extracted from his pocket a bundle of papers, from which he carefully selected one, and laid it on the table before the Captain.

"Well, sir," said the Captain, looking at the paper

for quite a while through his smoked-glass goggles, "it just looks like the other, 'pon my word. Why, I can remember every one of them names. I didn't s'pose I ever would have seen them names after this time, and yet here they are again. Dear me! what strange things does happen in this world!"

"Of course," said Maile, "I haven't brought the gentlemen along to sign it in your presence; it would be very annoying to compel them all to come away up here in the winter-time. They are city men, you know, and not accustomed to exposure at any time, and they'd look upon it as if it were almost as bad as a trip to Greenland."

"Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed the Captain.

"Yes, awfully funny, isn't it?" said Maile, forcing out a laugh, "and yet it is the truth; and consequently I trusted to your good nature, and your possible recollection of the parties, to persuade myself that you would have no hesitation to signing the paper in its present condition."

"Quite right, too," said the Captain; "and yet there is one thing funny; there is just one name less here than there was last time."

"What's that?" said Maile, quickly, taking the paper from the Captain's hands and looking at it. He did it so quickly that he had not thought to adjust his glasses, but when finally he did so, he touched each signature with his finger as he went along, and then exclaimed—

"Botheration! I really have forgotten one of them. Fortunately, however, I've a power of attorney to sign his name at any time; so, by your kind per-

mission, if you have pen and ink, I'll put it down right here."

"Certainly, sir," said the Captain, hurrying out to the kitchen for materials, and returning with them at once. "But s'pose you hadn't power of attorney, what's that got to do with it. So long's a name's on a thing, why that's all you want of it, I s'pose, eh, sir?" So speaking, the Captain gave Mr. Maile another grin, as expansive as the one with which he had treated him soon after his arrival.

"Captain Twinnett," said Maile, looking at the host after he had signed the missing name, "you appear to me to be a philosopher."

"Well, sir, if I ain't, I don't see what's the sense of my havin' been to sea a long time. Things ain't at sea as they are on shore, sir. Out there every man's a law to hisself, and any little matter like puttin' a signature on a thing, why, it's just as easy done as goin' over the side of the ship when you're to leeward, and the wind's blowin' awful strong. If the man whose name you're signin' ain't in any position to deny what seems to be his own handwritin', what's that to you? Mebbe it's a good deal to him, but that's his fault; you ain't to blame for it. If you ever want any signin' done, sir, here is the shop to come to. If you don't want to do it yourself, all you've got to do is to ask yours truly; he knows a good deal about that sort of thing, and he knows how to hold his tongue too."

Again Maile looked sharply at the Captain; but the old man seemed to be entirely in earnest, and as unconscious of saying anything out of the way as if

he had been delivering a homily from a pulpit somewhere.

"Captain," said Maile, finally, "you have more practical business sense than I ever expected to find in a man of your profession—I mean business sense regarding such kinds of business. The sailor usually sticks to his mast in this world, and consequently he never gets much above it; but a fellow of your common sense, as you have already expressed it to me, is pretty sure, sooner or later, to find something that will be of great service to him."

"That's what I'm livin' in hopes of," said the Captain. "Any time you see any business in that line, this is a first-rate place to come to, to get either information or assistance."

Maile took another long look at the Captain, but the old man did not change colour or position in the least under the gaze fixed upon him. Although he looked like an honest man, he certainly seemed to believe that forgery was a mere accident or incident of business, and if ever it were necessary to do anything of the sort, it seemed entirely justifiable as a business operation. Maile had heard of such men in New York, in fact he had seen some of their work, and he had been the principal prosecutor, or enemy at least, of the now invisible Paul Frayston on just such a charge.

"Captain," said Maile, after a considerable pause and much scrutiny, "if you believe as you do, perhaps you can be of great assistance to me, and I shall be very glad to compensate you handsomely. An acquaintance of mine died some years ago—in fact, the

very person about whom I once asked you a categorical question here on the subject of possibilities of drowning or escaping drowning."

"Yes, I remember it, sir," said the Captain, quickly.

"Well," continued Maile, "he left me a paper requesting me to look after his interests. He also bequeathed everything of which he stood possessed to his only child, who was a daughter, and appointed me his sole executor and administrator. Unfortunately, however, he died before he secured witnesses to this important document. Now, Captain, the heir, who is, as I say, a young lady and a very charming young lady, can never get possession of this property because her father's signature was not witnessed, the signature to this last will and testament."

"Well, sir," said the Captain, "what's that got to do with me?"

"Only this," said Maile, "that if you would be willing to take my word in the matter, and to sign, as witness, the will which I hold, it would be of considerable financial benefit to you, I assure you, and it will restore her own to a most estimable young woman who has suddenly been reduced from wealth to poverty by this lamentable instance of non-attention on the part of her father."

"What is the name of the party, sir, may I inquire?" asked the Captain.

"The name of the testator was—Paul Frayston."

"Indeed!" said the Captain. "Why, I've heard of that fellow, sir; and I've heerd of his daughter too. They've both been over here on this island in other times. That's a mighty nice gal of his, sir."

"I am glad you think so," said Maile; "I repeat what I've already said, that that estimable young woman is being kept out of her own on account of one single informality about her father's will. Now, if you knew him and respect her, you can do her an inestimable service, and, so far as I am concerned, relieve me of a responsibility to an extent for which I should be very glad to pay you freely, for time is money to me, and the condition of affairs is very annoying to me."

"Have you got the paper in your pocket, sir?" asked the Captain.

"Yes," said Maile, fumbling in nervous haste through some of the papers which he took from the inside pocket of his coat; "here it is. Look at it."

"I've seen Frayston's signature in other days," said the Captain, "and I must say that and this look as just alike as two peas. Give me the pen, sir. If I can help you through, here goes."

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Maile, as he folded the paper and replaced it in his pocket, "and if you will kindly mention the figures which you would like on the cheque which I shall send to you, you may count on receiving a remittance at once."

"Oh, never mind the cheque, sir; I'm perfectly willing to do such things for nothin'," said the Captain.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FRIENDLY CHAT.

"WELL, my dear, how do you feel now?" asked Burnham of his wife, after Maile had gone down to the boat, carefully escorted by Captain Twinnett.

"Feel?" gasped Mrs. Burnham; "I feel as if I had been taking a peep into the infernal regions. I haven't had such an experience since our literature-class read Dante's 'Inferno.'"

"You will discover, my dear," said Burnham, looking through the window in his abstracted way for an instant, "that you'll find a great deal worse things in real life than you can ever get from any poet, no matter if he happens to be our mutual friend Dante."

"I'm sorry to have you tell me so," said Mrs. Burnham, "for I'm given to listening a great deal, and it seems to me I've heard worse things this morning than I ever imagined might happen in the course of one's existence. Harry, my dear husband, do promise me that you never again will speak to that fellow Maile in any circumstances whatever."

"What nonsense, my dear! After what I've discovered this morning, there's all the more reason why I should speak to him. May Frayston is your best friend, and your friends are mine; consequently I have a hold upon Maile such as I never before had, and one which I ought to work to the very best of my ability for her interest."

"Don't do it; let somebody else do it. Let it be done by old Twinnett, who seems to be so earnest a friend of her father. I don't like my husband to touch pitch. By the way, Harry, how on earth do you suppose that that old sea-captain ever learned anything about Paul Frayston, and when do you suppose Frayston ever came over here? The Captain told Maile, you know, that Paul had been here, and yet I know May's father disappeared almost a year before Twinnett took the island."

"I don't know, my dear. If you want to ask me questions, don't mix any chronology up with them, for I'm not equal to it. It's all I can do to keep my own dates and appointments, let alone revise those of somebody else, and discover when they have or haven't been somewhere. The Captain's statement, though, sounds as if Paul were yet alive. There's either some mystery or some lying."

"At any rate, I do wish the Captain would hurry back and take us out of this place," said Nell, with a shudder. "I feel as if I had been standing in the ante-room of a criminal court somewhere. I never had such an experience in my life, except once when I was witness in the case of a friend of ours who had had some trouble with her servants, who had taken recourse to the courts."

"My dear," said Burnham, with a sigh, "you get a kind of an idea of what men have to go through in this world. I have had to hear things a good deal like this, half a dozen times in the course of my life, and I don't consider myself such a very old man, either."

"You poor fellow," murmured Mrs. Burnham, throwing her arms around her husband's neck and kissing him.

"Thank you, dear; I don't wish anybody any harm, but I am very glad——"

"Sh—sh—sh!" said Mrs. Burnham. "Here comes the Captain. I wonder how he is going to explain what's been going on?"

"Perhaps, my dear, if your curiosity is excited on the subject, it might be well to wait until he comes in, and let him speak for himself. I've no doubt that what he will have to say will be far more to the point than anything you or I could imagine by wondering."

"Oh, nonsense, Harry! Now you think you're being real smart, don't you—a great deal smarter than I?"

"My dear, a man must assert his prerogatives, you know."

"Nice fellow that, isn't it?" said the Captain, as he returned to the sitting-room, threw aside one of the sailcloth portieres of the apartment in which the Burnhams were, and invited the couple out into the warmth of the fireplace. "Ever seen him before?"

"I must say," said Burnham, "that I have; but after what I have seen to-day, I scarcely know how I can be hypocritical enough to address him again. And yet, from what I have heard, it will be quite necessary for me to do so."

"Well," said the Captain, giving a hitch to his trousers, and pushing to the back of his head the old soft hat which he habitually wore, "that's one of the questions, I s'pose, that bothers ev'rybody. It won't do to lose sight of what that feller has said here to-

day, and yet it is a matter of importance to have it used the way it ought to be. Now, if I could see that there gal of Frayston's, I——"

"We shall see her as soon as we go home, Captain," said Mrs. Burnham.

Her husband looked at her in astonishment; but she continued—

"Harry, we shall visit May as soon as we reach home. I shall expect you to telephone from the dock to have the horses ready, and we'll drive over there at once. No matter whether she is instructing one of her classes, we'll have a consultation with her, and tell her what we have seen and heard."

"Will you, though?" said the Captain, with an admiring look. "Well, upon my word, ma'am, you're one of the liveliest specimens of the sex that I ever saw in my life."

"Thank you, Captain; I am very much obliged for your good opinion. My own husband seems about as much astonished as you that I should have discovered what is exactly the proper thing to do in the circumstances. But I insist," said Mrs. Burnham, turning toward her husband, "that May Frayston shall learn all we have heard before she goes to sleep another night."

"Hadn't you better let it wait till morning, my dear?" suggested Harry Burnham; "because, if you tell it to her this afternoon, she may not sleep at all to-night."

Mrs. Burnham frowned a little, meditated, and finally said—

"I don't know but you are right. It will worry

the dear girl dreadfully to know all of a sudden what we have been discovering, and yet she ought to know it."

"Very well, then; let us think it over to-night, and break the news gently to her to-morrow—and, still more, let us break it sensibly. That's a suggestion which I offer you as a matter of tact."

"Oh, nonsense, Harry! don't talk any such stuff to me. You know perfectly well that I don't want to tell May anything but what she ought to know, and what she would be ever so glad to know."

"Very true; nevertheless, it wouldn't do any harm for you to discuss the matter carefully with a sober, sensible, thoughtful, logical, practical, and otherwise trustworthy and admirable person like your own husband before you go and tell her anything about it."

"I suppose you are right," said Mrs. Burnham; "but"—then she sighed—"Oh dear, what a dreadful lot of time has to be wasted in this world!"

"Captain," said Burnham, "had you any suspicion of anything of this kind before?"

"Well, sir," the Captain replied, apparently measuring his words, and also weighing them very carefully, to be doubly sure that he was giving correct measure. "I don't mind sayin' to you that I did have a kind of suspicion that somethin' was wrong in that quarter. But—well, I thought that I could just as well wait as long as might be necessary before I made up my mind on the subject an' talked to any one else about it; an', seein' as how the thing has come off, I'm not a bit sorry that I waited in the way I did."

"But, from what I saw and heard this afternoon, it doesn't seem impossible—in fact, it seems entirely probable—that that fellow Maile is a deliberate forger."

"Yes, sir," said the Captain, with entire imperturbability; "that's exactly what I've thought of him ever since I first saw him."

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Burnham; "is it possible? I have known that man for a great many years, and I never before imagined that that might be the secret and the explanation of the great Frayston muddle."

"Well, sir," said the Captain, "I've heard about that row myself. I didn't let on to him all I knew this afternoon, but I knew there was somethin' wrong somewhere, for I don't b'lieve a feller like that Frayston ever done anythin' wrong of the kind that these fellers have been layin' to him; an' when they come to comin' over here and talking about his affairs, why—I didn't listen around particularly, and yet I heard a good deal, an' I put one and two together and formed my own opinion. Mebbe I'm wrong, and mebbe I ain't; but I'll bet a hundred to one that I'm right, and I'll put up the money in the hands of anybody that you may say."

"But I don't see, Captain, how you are going to have any opportunity of that kind, for apparently we both of us will want to bet on the same side."

"Is that so?" said the Captain, with a great big laugh. "Very well, I guess bettin' isn't necessary anyhow. If you're a friend of Paul Frayston—— By the way, I s'pose you are?"

"Friend!" exclaimed Burnham; "I always thought

he was one of the best men alive, and after he died I thought still more of him."

"But you must have heard some of these yarns that have been goin' 'round 'bout him," suggested the Captain.

"Yes, I've heard them all, but I never attached the slightest importance to any of them. I made up my mind that one of two things was the case: either the man had been entirely misunderstood, or some one was deliberately undermining his reputation and character. Unfortunately, he disappeared at such a time and in such a way that I've never been able to put my theory to practical proof, but if ever there is an opportunity for me to do so, I fully expect to prove that Paul Frayston was an entirely honest man, and never did in all his life anything for which he could possibly be ashamed afterward."

"Just the idea I got of him myself, sir," said the Captain—"just the idea I got of him myself. If you'll allow me, sir, I would like to shake hands with you. I do like to meet a man that knows how to stick up for another man who's decent when the man that's decent is down on his luck and havin' a hard time. An' now," continued the Captain, as he wrung Burnham's hand, "considerin' what you have heard this afternoon, can't you agree with your wife, an' think it might be a good thing for Miss Frayston to know all about it at once?"

"Why," said Burnham, rather puzzled, "I suppose I could bring myself to that view."

"Good!" exclaimed the Captain. "An' don't you think it would be kind of comfortin' for her to hear it

at first hand, from the man to whom all the rascality was proposed? Because, if you do, all you've got to do is to bring her down anywhere near the dock, and wave a white handkerchief so I can see it, an' I'll come off with a boat and bring her on the island myself. If you an' your good lady choose to come along, why, I ain't got no objections whatever; but I do think that young woman, being her father's only heir, has got a right to learn what somebody knows—somebody that ain't got no interest in the business whatsoever, except to see Frayston cleared and stand square before his feller-men again as an honest man."

"Very well, Captain, I shall act according to your views. I'm so much obliged to you for the opportunity you have given me this afternoon, of taking a peep inside the character of somebody else, that I will make it my special business to go off and find Miss Frayston to-day. My wife will assist me at it, I am sure, and we will bring her over here at the earliest possible and convenient time."

"This island is open twenty-four hours a day," said the Captain, "an' if you an' the young woman and your good lady should come over here all together, an' kind o' get stuck here on account of weather or the coldness of the air or anything else, why, there's lots of room here that'll accommodate you, an' you needn't worry yourself the slightest bit about what you're goin' to have for breakfast in the mornin'; that's my look-out, you know."

Burnham looked at his wife, Mrs. Burnham looked at her husband, and finally they made an agreement that, if possible, they would secure May that afternoon

and bring her out to the island. Then they called their boat and went away, and as far as they could see the island behind them, they also saw the Captain waving a very white handkerchief, and looking after them through his big field-glasses.

"Harry," whispered Mrs. Burnham, as soon as they were ashore, "it seems like an awful dream."

"It seems to me, my dear," said Burnham, "like a very pleasant dream, and one that I have got a string fastened to, so that when I wake up it can't get away from me."

"That is all very true, but what use are you going to make of it? This fellow whom we have been listening to calls himself your friend, and among your acquaintances you stand towards him in the position of a friend."

"Never mind," said Burnham; "if he is an enemy to an old friend of mine, I'll look first to those who are under the sod and can't speak for themselves."

"That sounds just like you, Harry. I declare, in spite of all your slowness and nonsense, you have an immense amount of sense when it comes to the point."

"Thank you, my dear; I didn't suppose you ever would understand it, but seeing that you have done so, I wish to extend to you my sentiments of distinguished consideration."

"Don't talk any diplomatic nonsense to me; I mean exactly what I say. You have been so cool-headed and cool-hearted about this affair of May's and her father's that sometimes I've almost lost patience with you, but now I must admit, while there's a clue that seems to promise the way out of this

awful puzzle, you've woke up about as much and thoroughly as any one I ever met in my life."

"You think so, do you?" said Burnham, placing his hand on his wife's shoulder. "Well, I always knew you had slow but sure sense of whatever there is good in me."

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE MYSTERY.

"MAY," said Mrs. Burnham, when Miss Frayston hurried down from her class-room in response to the cards of Mr. and Mrs. Burnham which had been sent up to her, "we have something very important indeed to say to you."

"Indeed?" responded the young woman; "I am very glad to hear it. I suppose a great deal that I have been going over with my pupils for the past few days may also be quite important, but I confess I am dreadfully tired of it. If you have anything entirely new, do let me know of it. What is it about?—theatre, operas, church quarrel, or neighbourhood gossip? Don't hold me in suspense; speak quickly, I beg of you."

"May," said Mrs. Burnham, impressively, "don't be flippant; it is about your father."

Then Mrs. Burnham stood in a position of expectancy; and awaited developments. She appeared somewhat astonished and greatly disappointed that

May did not turn white or red, or any other colour not natural to her, on hearing her friend's statement; she merely looked inquisitive, as if news from her father were a matter of daily occurrence, and she was impressed with no sentiment stronger than a mild curiosity as to what he might be doing and where he was.

"It is about your father, May," continued Mrs. Burnham. "We have found an old friend of his, and we have a clue to some of his difficulties. But I pity you dreadfully, my dear girl, if the developments are what we expect they will be."

"Don't pity me, I beg of you," said Miss Frayston. "I ask no pity from any one, and I ask only forbearance for my dear father. All I can discover regarding his past life is entirely to his credit. All of his friends speak well of him; and anything new that may come to me from anywhere, I shall expect will be entirely complimentary to him, his character, and his business relations."

Mrs. Burnham looked as if she had brought information to the wrong place. The response was so cool, so calm, so confident that Mrs. Burnham's faith in her old friend was shaken. She expected her to faint, or at least to weep, but she had done neither. An unwelcome and awkward silence fell upon the trio; Burnham finally broke it by saying—

"Miss Frayston, a better way in this matter, it seems to me, would be for you at once to meet Captain Twinnett. I am told that he is a very old and very dear friend of your father's. If this is true, it would be well for you to get from first hands—by

which I mean Captain Twinnett's—a lot of entirely new matter regarding your father's history."

"I quite agree with you," said Miss Frayston, looking confidently at her visitors. "Do you suppose you could put me under still further obligations by persuading my estimable employers to let me go away from them this afternoon? I am a mere nobody at present, you know, and you are people of some importance in the neighbourhood. Would you mind speaking with them?"

"Most certainly not," said Mrs. Burnham. "I can't imagine any one holding any one back at such a time."

"Nell," exclaimed Burnham, "do be careful! Don't allow your feelings to run away with your manners."

Mrs. Burnham turned to her husband, looked at him curiously a moment, and said, "If I didn't make that mistake the evening you proposed to me, I don't believe there is any danger of my doing so now. Come along, May."

The Cashups were quite willing, when appealed to by Mrs. Burnham, to allow the tutor of their children to go away for the afternoon, particularly as it was said that it was quite necessary on legal grounds that Miss Frayston should obtain some information on that day. The Cashups were very rich, and they attributed a great deal of their success to certain operations of the law, which enabled them to obtain possession of property which otherwise they might never have owned. Consequently, very soon after the hour of ordinary mid-day lunch, May Frayston and the Burnhams were again on the way to Twinnett's Island.

The Captain met them all with a genial smile, but also with the air of a man who was quite willing to wait two or three hundred years for anything which it might be necessary to say or do. He helped both ladies out of the boat as gallantly as if he were not rather stiff and old, and when he ushered them into his so-called sitting-room, they found a great many evidences of his taste which they would not have expected in a place of the kind, and which had not been there in the summer.

"I don't put on no style," said the Captain, "but I like to have aroun' me whatever I really enjoy in this world, an' if other folks like to come an' take a look at it, why, I suppose they think all the more of me, because there ain't anythin' here that ain't entirely natural."

"I think, Captain," said Mrs. Burnham, "that no one of your acquaintances would take any exception to anything which is or is not in your house; but to-day, in particular, I brought over my very critical friend Miss Frayston, and I am certain that her opinion will entirely agree with mine."

"Very much obleeged to you, ma'am; I've seen Miss Frayston before, an' I know her to be a good one, an' a true friend to her father. Would you mind my takin' her out on the rocks an' under the trees a little while, an' asking her some questions about the old man?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Burnham, and her husband murmured in echo. Then they both lounged back in their chairs, looking at various newspapers, which were not at all old, while the Captain offered

his arm to May Frayston and escorted her out to the rocks.

"Harry," exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, as the couple looked through the windows at the old man and the young girl walking around on the island, "it does appear as if nothing but mystery can come of any visit whatever to this awful place! There is the Captain, an old, grey-haired, doubled-up man. There is May, as pretty as a picture. I do believe she might to-day sit to any mediæval religious artist in the character of a saint, and he would paint a prettier picture than he ever did from any other model. Yet, what can be the reason that he has such a hold upon her?"

"I don't know, my dear. If I could answer all your questions, there wouldn't be any need of a hereafter," suggested Burnham.

"Nonsense, Harry," said Mrs. Burnham. "I am asking for information which I have an entire right to desire, and I want you to supply it for me. If you don't you are no husband of mine. There!"

"That settles it, my dear. Anything you wish to ask me, I shall furnish a reply for, even if I have to look through the entire city and our own village besides."

"Very well, then; what I want to know is what there can be about this old man that attracts May Frayston so powerfully. You know how she acted, I almost said flirted, the last time she was over here with us? Now you see her through the window there, acting as if she and the Captain had known each other for years, and she was merely asking him some ordinary questions about the weather, or the

strength of sailcloth, or a lot of other stupid nonsensical things that the rest of us don't care a bit about."

"The Captain sent for her, my dear," said Burnham, "and she was very anxious to come to him. Consequently, it isn't entirely impossible that there is some understanding between them. If neither of them choose to tell us about it, that is their own loss. I am dreadfully sorry for any one who hasn't the unspeakable advantage of your counsel when they are in any trouble. Nevertheless, the facts being as they are, we may as well bide our time."

"But suppose she acts as she did before, what on earth am I to do?"

"My dear," replied Burnham, "I was under the impression, the last time we talked of her, you thought she was entirely in love with Maile. Am I mistaken, or do you reason on both sides and give old Twinnett the preference, which may afterwards be set aside by a better-informed authority?"

"Don't let us talk any more about it," said Mrs. Burnham, "for here they come. I used to think I knew May very well, but I declare I am somewhat in doubt about the result of the forthcoming chat. Of course, there must be a chat. I have brought her over here for a special purpose, and she wouldn't be a woman true and friendly if she didn't unload her heart at once to me."

"Perhaps I had better sit far aft, or far forward, whichever the case may be," suggested Burnham, "on our homeward trip, for if she has a great deal to say to you, I know by experience that it isn't at all necessary for me to be a listener."

"Yes, it is, too. What we have heard to-day is of such a character that only a first-class listener can be sure that what he has been hearing is really true."

"Thank you, my dear; another illustration of the superiority of man."

"Nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Burnham. "But whatever May knows and has learned or may learn, I am going to find out before I go to bed; otherwise I never can sleep."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Burnham.

Within a few moments Mrs. Burnham and May Frayston were consulting as privately and earnestly as any two women as ever were seen together, even if some of them have been obliged to unburden their hearts regarding the torment of servants or the wickedness of children. Burnham himself withdrew from their presence and smoked a cigar, sitting on a rock and overlooking the landscape. At last his wife rejoined him, walking a little way in advance of Miss Frayston, and as she reached her husband she whispered in his ear—

"You were entirely right, and I made a dreadful mistake. May understands Captain Twinnett perfectly, and is quite willing to believe anything, either good or bad, which she may hear about Maile. I don't believe she is engaged to him at all."

"Nobody else ever believed it, my dear, if that is any consolation to you. You women seem to think that if a fellow shows any admiration for a woman, he is in love with her. This is a mistake, as a number of women have already discovered."

"Don't give me any moral lectures this afternoon, please. My heart and head are full enough of what I already have had to listen to. Dear me! dear me! what an awful wicked world this is!"

"Yes, my dear; that is one of the reasons why I persuaded you to enter the Burnham family—so you could see less of the world's wickedness."

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Burnham, with a toss of her head. "I don't think you have succeeded during the proceedings of the present day."

CHAPTER XV.

SOME SURPRISES.

DURING the long winter, gossip languished at the various lounging-places in the town of Point Reach. The days were short, the nights were long, and so many of the days were stormy that men whose work ordinarily took them out of doors had to take refuge in the various lounging-places about the town. It was not the right season of the year for lawsuits, there were no social scandals but what had already been talked threadbare, and conversational topics finally became so scarce that even in bar-rooms there sometimes were hours consumed in conversation about the spiritual condition of the community.

Consequently there was great excitement in the cigar store one evening when the sexton of the church entered and remarked—

"Captain Twinnett's gone out West."

There was a general exclamation of surprise, and then the town doubter said—

"How d'ye know?"

"Sam Jimmerson told me all about it," said the sexton. "The Captain hired Sam to take care of the island during the winter. I talked to him all I could, but he didn't have much to say. He only said over and over again that the old man had gone West. I made up my mind right away that Sam would have a doleful time over there, so I promised to go over once in a while and keep him company; but he said he guessed I'd better not take the trouble, because the old man had locked up pretty much everything there was to eat and drink and smoke, and had paid him to keep himself in provisions."

"I wonder where he's gone?" remarked the cigar-dealer.

"That's just what I thought, first thing," said the sexton; "an' as Sam didn't seem to know himself, I went down to the post-office an' asked, and the postmaster said that the old man left word to have all his letters sent to him out to Boise City, in Idaho."

"That's in the mining district," said the cigar-dealer.

"I wonder whether he knows any mines out there, an' what he gets out of 'em—whether it's gold or silver?" said the doubter.

"Well, there's one thing you can be very sure of," said the cigar-dealer, "and that is that he don't dig up anybody else's old silver or gold that was buried

during the Revolution, and he don't find any of Captain Kidd's treasure either. And that isn't all; a man that goes out into that country isn't likely to be a man that makes or handles counterfeit money, like some people around here have insinuated that Captain Twinnett done."

"Oh, now," said the town doubter, deprecatingly, "you know I just hinted that mebbe that was what he was up to. When you don't know what a feller's doin', why ye—ye—ye——"

"You think the worst of him; that's about the size of it, isn't it?" said the cigar-dealer.

"I don't think so bad of him," said the doubter. "Why, jest a while 'fore he was going away him and me was talking about a lot of real estate I've got here, that he thought he might have a friend to buy some day or other. It lies mighty nice, an' a city fellow that's got a lot of money to spend could lay it out to about as good advantage as any place that I know of. Jest look here;" and here the doubter took a piece of paper from his pocket and showed some drawings.

"Oh, don't give us that old real-estate chestnut!" said the proprietor of the shop in great haste; "we've heard about that property of yours almost since this town was settled. Tell us something new."

"Well, it lies good, an' is well drained, an' there ain't any prettier piece of ground in this town, an' if any of you had it I'll bet you'd talk about it just as much as I do."

"I wish some of us could find out something about what the old man's doing out there, and whether he's

goin' to make a big strike," said the dealer. "I'd like to see him get along. I wonder if there isn't somebody who could tell us?"

The only person who could have given any definite information on the subject, besides Captain Twinnett himself, was Mr. Maile, and, for various reasons, he was not within call of the gentlemen who were so solicitous about the Captain's welfare. Since the operation in penmanship, already alluded to, Mr. Maile had visited the Captain several times, and finally persuaded him, as apparently a very trustworthy person for that sort of work, to go out to the mines which were in dispute between the Frayston estate and the alleged company, to do some work and obtain some additional information as to the value of the claims. The Captain had seemed entirely willing, and met all of Maile's shrewd suggestions with such confident assurance and such an apparent understanding of the purposes of his employer that Maile felt entirely at ease. After he had received several letters from Twinnett, he was so much better satisfied with the condition of affairs that he began again to press his suit, and urge the naming of the day in which Miss Frayston should make him the happiest man alive.

"You must remember the conditions under which I made the only promise that already has passed," said May.

"I am not at all forgetful of it, I assure you; but I am so satisfied of the ultimate and almost immediate success of my endeavour, that I trust I may be excused for some slight impatience."

"I must insist upon an entire clearing of my father's

reputation before I can ever change his name for another," said the lady.

Maile was obliged to accept this as an answer, yet he grew happier daily, and his business friends noticed a change in him which astonished them extremely. It even became a subject of conversation among them when they met at the various places of entertainment at which their business was conducted, for they belonged to the very large class which, though nominally having offices, seem unable to transact business except in the vicinity of a bar-room.

"I do believe the fellow is growing respectable," suggested one of the party one day. "He looks better, behaves with less appearance of hypocrisy, looks every one straight in the eye, and really seems inclined to tell the truth in all matters, instead of saying one thing and meaning another."

"He must be making money, then," said Mr. Tripp, the quiet little man who had disturbed proceedings at several of the meetings of the conspirators. "He is that sort of man. Like Becky Sharp, 'Wait till we get the pence, and then we will be respectable.' I guess, from the appearance of things, we made a mistake when we assigned our stock to him at the prices which we agreed to take. Nothing but money could make such a change in a man of that kind."

"He may suddenly have become religious," suggested one of the associates, who had once been a member of the Church himself, and still maintained at least the conversation, if not the walk, of the class with which he had once been associated.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Tripp. "Religion can't change that sort of fellow, unless he happens to be on his death-bed and doesn't see any chance of picking his way out. Even then I shouldn't like to trust him at the gates of heaven, if I were doorkeeper there."

"I am told," said the rubicund gentleman who was fond of old champagne, "that a few days ago, when he was asked to shave a small note to help a man in trouble, he actually lent the full sum asked for, and declined to accept any interest at all, the loan being for a very few days. I really wonder, taking everything in consideration, whether the fellow isn't losing his mind."

"No! no! no!" said Mr. Tripp; "he isn't that kind; it's only good people who lose their minds. Fellows of that sort can hold on to everything they get so long as the grip is to be made by their minds. Trust him not to lose any mind. I shouldn't wonder, now, if all this is put on. It reminds me very much of what I used to hear about mules when I was a boy in the country. The farmers used to say a mule would be good for six months to get a chance to kick somebody afterwards."

Nevertheless, Maile's reformation, such as there was of it, was sincere and genuine. His affection for May Frayston was as earnest as any sentiment or sensation he ever had experienced, and, as he felt himself entirely sure of his new investment, he was able to give his entire mind to the affairs of his heart. The experience was so entirely new, and the sensation so delightful, that it was very hard for him to take

his mind off it, even when opportunity offered for making a great deal of money through means which once he would quickly have availed himself of.

The greatest surprise experienced by his old associates, however, occurred one Sunday morning, when, after a dinner the night before, followed by a quiet little game which lasted until a very late hour in the morning, one who started homeward before the others returned in great haste to say that he had seen Maile going into church. The announcement was greeted with a storm of laughter and some language such as is frequently heard on Sunday in the pulpit, though not always in exactly such connection. The statement seemed so utterly improbable that the informant insisted on being accompanied to the house of worship by the entire party, or at least by a sufficient number to support him in his assertion. Several of the party acted upon his suggestion, and for the first time in some years entered a church ; and there, sure enough, sat Mr. Maile in a pew, with a Prayer-book in his hand, apparently following the service with as much interest as any one else present. When there came a period of the service at which the gentlemen could escape from the sacred edifice without causing confusion, they hurried away to rejoin their associates, and all experienced a degree of surprise to which they long had been strangers.

"Gentlemen," said one at length, "there is nothing left for us. If that fellow is going to experience a change of heart—I believe that is the expression by which such action as his is denominated—I am afraid all of us will have to collapse. If the Church can get

hold of a fellow of that sort, there is no hope for the rest of us continuing in our present ways."

"Don't be in too much of a hurry about that," suggested quiet little Mr. Tripp. "Let's see whether it strikes in. I think religion will affect him about as much as vaccination does some people. You can apply it again and again and again, but somehow it never takes."

Nevertheless, the unwonted spectacle had such an effect upon most of the party, that for the coming week they were frequently absent-minded, thoughtful, and melancholy. They would have been less shocked had they heard that Mr. Maile had been gathered to his fathers.

CHAPTER XVI.

GOLD-HUNTING.

WHEN Captain Twinnett reached Idaho, it was in the guise of an honest old prospector as grizzly and deliberate as if he had been in the mining regions all his life. He frequently carried a pick and a bag and a hammer, and went about testing rock and asking questions so skilfully that the natives that met him very quickly informed one another that there was no tenderfoot about that old fellow, and that he knew pretty well what he had come for and where to look for it.

It appears they were right, for the Captain, who, like a great many men who have lived solitary for a

long time, had the custom of talking to himself, one day soliloquized thus—

"This does seem sort of natural work, after all. I didn't s'pose I'd fall back into it so easy. Strange what different ways a fellow's life will run, in spite of whatever he tries to do! I didn't ever suppose, when I got on to that island, that I'd ever be off prospecting again; but here I am at the old business, and it seems just as natural as if I hadn't been out of it a day. I do wonder what some of my old friends and customers around Point Reach would say if they saw me now?"

Contrary to his custom in the little village to which his island was nominally attached, the Captain spent a great deal of time in lounging-places. He made himself at home at the various establishments which were partly hotels, partly rum-shops, and with another very large fraction of varying quantity, which was of the nature of a gambling-house. He scraped acquaintance with a great many people, fell into desultory conversation, and shrewdly managed to get a great deal of information about different mines and claims and prospects in the entire section of the territory which was tributary to Boise City.

He also made himself quite familiar with a number of records, reading papers, no matter in what sort of penmanship, with a rapidity quite unlike the hesitation which marked his examination of the agreement given him to sign as witness at his own island a few months before.

After a day spent in this manner, he once sat down and remarked to himself—

"I don't see but what these claims are just as good as ever. Nobody's jumped any of the property; nothing is set against it for the non-fulfilment of the conditions under which mining land has to be taken up. I guess, if the old man's daughter chooses to put in a claim, she can have it entirely proved."

Another time the Captain said to himself—

"Strange how it is that some fellows that are very smart in this world seem so satisfied with their own wits that it never occurs to them that perhaps somebody else may be smarter. There is that fellow that sent me out here; I don't know of a more thoroughbred scoundrel in the world, and yet he's trusting me, apparently, as closely as if I were his very best and nearest friend, and as if he had a very tight grip on me in some way. Well, well, 'he laughs best who laughs last.'"

After spending some time in the mining district, Captain Twinnett wrote a long letter to his employer, and received in return some papers, including power of attorney to do certain things as the agent of Mr. Maile, assignee for all the interested persons in the Frayston claim. As he opened and read these documents, the smile upon his face was as broad as that which on the stage precedes the best speech of the leading comedian. At last he laid all the papers carefully upon the floor, placed his hands on his knees, and indulged in a long hearty laugh. He laughed so persistently that once or twice he showed signs of suffocation, but finally recovered himself, and then indulged in another little chat with himself.

"Yes, he's got everything exactly to suit him, apparently; certificates of assignment from all his fellow-conspirators, deed from Frayston himself—about as well drawn up a paper as I ever saw anywhere—and he has everything just exactly as the most honest man alive would like to have it so's to be entirely satisfied with his future prospects. He's a smart fellow, and no mistake. It really seems a shame to upset the business-projects of such a man, and show him that after all he has been overreaching himself; but business is business, as he himself has often said, and I guess, when he sees the little stroke of business that I will play on him, he will be quite as astonished as any man can safely be and not die. Oh dear! it's a queer world; and the older you grow the queerer people you find. If it wasn't for that girl——"

One day while the Captain was strolling about, looking at a number of little holes in the ground, which in eastern centres of mining speculation were dignified by the name of "mines," and were loaded with a quantity of stock certificates which would have covered the mines entirely, and perhaps filled the holes level with the surface of the ground, he met another prospector, who looked at him curiously, and finally said—

"Ev'ry place that I see you looking at, pard, around here seems to be a bit that a very nice feller that I knowed out here once opened himself."

"Is that so?" asked the Captain, and then prudently waited for a reply.

"Yes," said the old prospector. "It was a feller

named Frayston—one of the cleverest chaps I ever seed, too. He was a tenderfoot, but he was a good 'un. Mighty seldom you see the like of him anywhere. He helped me out of an awful scrape once. I had a little hole in the rock here that I thought would likely to open somethin', an' I was down to my last cent, so that I couldn't pay for grub, and I offered to sell him a share in it for a ten-dollar bill, and after he heard all about it he took a good look at it and handed me twenty, and said he didn't care about any share in anything new, but if ever I struck luck and found anybody else in the fix I was in that day, he wished I'd hand the twenty to him, with Frayston's compliments and mine. You don't find men like that very often in this world, pard."

"True enough—true enough," said the Captain, going into a brown study.

"I wish that feller would ever turn up out here again," said the old prospector. "I don't want to ask no more favours of him, for I'm doing pretty well now. I've never made a big strike, but I've got some money in the bank for all that. But I'd like to tell him about some games that's been goin' on around here that might upset his rights here some day if he ain't careful."

"How's that?" asked the Captain.

"Oh, only that folks has been looking at these here properties of his once in a while, and talking as if mebbe they might jump 'em, an' I've kept him in mind so much and remembered his kindness to me, that every once in a while I've taken pains to go around an' do some work on 'em, an' record it in his

favour. I don't know that I'll ever see him again, but if he ever turns up out here, he'll find that what's his has been looked after. I ain't the kind of man to forget a friend."

"Give us your hand, old man," said the Captain, coming out of his brown study. "You're the sort of man I like to meet. I've been around this world a good deal, an' I assure you that it's the first time I ever met a fellow exactly like you."

After that the Captain and his new-found acquaintance were frequently seen together, and before long the Captain had the pleasure of writing his employer that he had made arrangements to have the assessment work done upon each of the claims, and would very speedily return. After writing this letter, the Captain read it aloud several times to himself, putting different inflections upon it each time, but also indulging each time in a hearty laugh.

"Oh dear! dear! dear!" said the Captain, "it's almost worth all the bother that he's put me to, to think of how he'll look when he finds how I'm really fixin' things. Smart? Well, if I was as stupid as he is smart, I'd be the most hopeless lunatic that ever lived. And yet—oh dear! dear! dear! I must give my whole mind to this subject for a long while. It's too good to miss. It'll be better than any play that ever was put on the stage. And the beauty of it is that I'll be there to see it. I wonder what little May Frayston would think if I could tell her all I've found out? I'm afraid to write to her, for fear that somebody else will get hold of the correspondence; but when the time does come—well, an earthquake

or a volcano will be merely child's play to the explosion that will lift that fellow off his feet."

The Captain looked dreamy for a little while, and finally remarked—

"And yet the fellow will get on his feet again, I suppose, though I'll do all I can to have them touch the floor of the penitentiary first. To think of all the trouble he has made, all the mischief that he has done, is enough to make a man want to commit murder. If it wasn't for that girl that I've got to get out of her present trouble, I think I'd go and kill him myself. Still, I don't know any worse punishment that can come to him than to go on living.

"Ah, Mr. Maile! I'll be back in New York pretty soon; I'll make you acquainted with some things about Captain Twinnett that you never thought of before. I'll give you some ideas about that dead and gone Paul Frayston that'll make your eyes bulge through the glasses which you wear over them. I guess I'm beginning to feel too ugly. I'll have to drop once more into my favourite song to pacify my mind—

"We'll stand the storm; it won't be long:
We'll anchor by-and-by,
And gaily sing, as cash we swing,
'Oh, how is that for high?'"

CHAPTER XVII.

BACK AGAIN.

WINTER was lingering in the lap of Spring, lingering with a persistence and effusiveness which was highly exasperating to people who wished to make gardens at Point Reach, when one day the sexton of the church burst into the post-office, where a number of the natives were waiting for their mail matter, and announced—

"He's back!"

"Well," said a grey-bearded gossip, after the entire party had looked inquiringly for a moment, "perhaps if you'll tell us who you mean by 'he,' we'll be able to make somethin' out of it."

"Now listen to that!" said the sexton, in an aggrieved tone. "Just as if there could be more more than one 'he' when a fellow talks in this way. By 'he' I mean Captain Twinnett, of course. He's back again."

"When did he reach town?" asked some one.

"I don't believe he's reached town yet, but the messenger that carries the money from the savings-bank in to the bank of deposit in New York, said he'd seen him in the street in the city. There couldn't be any mistake about it, because he was looking just the same way he always did, an' apparently hadn't had his hair cut or been shaved since he left here."

"Reckon I'll go down to the depôt and see," said the grey-haired native, slowly working his way out of the crowd.

"Hadn't you better wait for your letters?" said the sexton, sarcastically. No one had ever seen the grey-beard receive a letter.

"No; I reckon any letters that come for me kin wait when there's anythin' goin' on of public interest," said the old man.

Some of the people standing by followed the old man to the railway station. There was no certainty about which train Twinnett might arrive by, as some of them admitted on the way down; but, as one man remarked who pretty accurately expressed the sentiments of those about him, there wasn't much doing at that season of the year, and if there was anything going on that was worth seeing, it was well to be there in time so as not to miss it.

Captain Twinnett did not arrive that afternoon, but such consolation as there was in being looked for might have been his had he been able to see the crowd which stood patiently about the station, scrutinizing train after train, and exchanging suppositions as to the possible time of the arrival of the one citizen of Point Reach who had recently been in the mining regions. Some of the natives even imagined that he would return carrying a coffee-sack filled with precious metals, and that he would at least have specimens of pay ore to show to any one who might visit the island; perhaps, indeed, he would bring some of them over to the village, and place them on exhibition in the village drug store; for didn't

any one who killed an unusually large snake, or caught a particularly fine bass, or attempted to paint a picture, put the results of his labour in the drug store, for the benefit of the community? They rather guessed Point Reach was a place that had some public spirit in it.

After three days of patient waiting, the sexton of the church had his gaze rewarded. From one of the trains that reached the town about noon there stepped the object of his search. The sexton was by the side of the train in a moment.

"Glad to see you back, Captain. Let me help you carry your bag; you must be tired of doing it yourself after this long time away. See anybody you know out there? Bring anything back with you to interest the folks? Got any stock to sell in a mine? Can't tell a fellow, I s'pose, of a good place to go out there and strike a good-paying lot of ore, can you? I wouldn't mind makin' a little money that way myself, if I could. Perhaps you can——"

"Excuse me a moment," said the Captain, as a lady came down the platform steps and walked up to the Captain.

"Why, how do you do, my dear madam?" continued the old man, with a profound bow. "I'm very glad to see you lookin' so well. I trust you've been entirely well since the last time I saw you?"

May Frayston quickly took the Captain's hand, and looked at him as earnestly as if he were to be the bringer of long-expected news. The sexton of the church eyed the couple as hungrily as if he expected to see a transfer of bullion from the Captain

to the lady, though why any such transfer should be made, as he afterward admitted to himself, was not clear to his mind.

"I wonder what she knows about him?" muttered the sexton, after the Captain and Miss Frayston walked aside, in a manner which indicated that they wished no third party to assist them in conversation. "I know that girl by sight; she sometimes comes to church with the Burnhams that live out at the hill. I do declare there are queer goings-on in this world."

With this sage reflection, the sexton returned to the village, and any one who might doubt the imaginative quality of the American nature would speedily have been undeceived by following the worthy man about from place to place, and hearing the news which was elaborated from the very little which he had seen and heard.

As for the Captain and the lady, they quickly separated, the old man taking a hack for the town dock, from which place he went to his island, while May Frayston went immediately to the home of the Burnhams.

"May Frayston!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, on greeting the visitor; "you grow a year younger every week, I do believe. I never in my life saw you looking so well and rosy as you are this morning. How does it happen? If teaching other people's children puts one in such condition, I shall really be tempted to get a separation from Harry for a while, and go to teaching myself."

"Teaching hasn't anything whatever to do with it, you precious goose!" exclaimed May Frayston, em-

bracing her old friend with great ardour. "Oh, if I only could tell you!"

"May Frayston," said Mrs. Burnham, retreating a step, and shaking her finger impressively at her friend, "I do believe you've heard something—something—something to encourage you about your dear father."

"I—I—— Oh, I daren't say anything about it, for fear I'll tell it all!" exclaimed Miss Frayston; "but oh, Nell, I'm so happy, I don't know what to do!" Saying thus, the girl threw her arms around her friend and danced madly about the floor — an operation which seems to give ladies of a certain age a great deal of comfort on occasions when other means of expressing joy are inadequate.

"May, I beg of you," said Mrs. Burnham, as soon as she was able to breathe again, "don't—don't be too sanguine. I don't know anything about it, but it would be awful if your hopes were raised, and then dashed to the ground again."

"But they can't be dashed to the ground again, I tell you. Why—— Oh, oh, oh! I shall have to keep my hand over my mouth all the while, or I shall tell everything that I know about it, and that may spoil all. Besides, I must retain my senses sufficiently to say what I came for, which is, that I do wish ever so much that you and your husband would take me over to Twinnett's Island once more."

"Why, the island isn't open, my dear girl; the Captain has gone out West, I am told."

"I am sure he is back again," said Miss Frayston. "I am sure I saw him in the village. If you only knew what comfort it is to me to go to that island

and look off to the water! It's from the water that I expect my help, you know."

"We will go," said Mrs. Burnham; "when shall it be?"

"Just as soon as possible; the sooner the better," said Miss Frayston; "and I myself will write to the Captain, telling him to expect us and not be away. I shall tell him that we want a real nice dinner again; but we shall depend entirely upon him, and if the season is too early or too late, or something, we'll put up with whatever he can give us. Really, Nell, I haven't had such happy times in years as I did those afternoons we spent over there."

"May," exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, "as I live, I believe that old man knows something about your father!"

"Well," said Miss Frayston, suddenly looking very sober, "what if he does?"

"Then," said Mrs. Burnham, with a far-away look, "I shall have been one of the worst geese that ever was on the face of the earth. Do you know, May, I really imagined that you had lost your senses, and were flirting with that old fellow the two last times we were over there? It worried me a great deal, and I told Harry so."

"You are a goose, Nell, although you are married to one of the wisest men in the world," said May Frayston, once more embracing and kissing her friend.

Meanwhile, many of the natives of Point Reach were in a high state of excitement. The news of the Captain's return had passed rapidly from man to man, and everybody was curious as to why the old

man had gone to the mining regions, and as to what he had brought back. Business men, proprietors of stores, builders of houses, stockholders in the local bank, men who would have resented as impertinence any inquiry into their own private affairs, forgot everything else in their curiosity as to the cause and result of the old man's western trip. A lawyer or two became infected by the local contagion, and began to devise plans for obtaining the true inwardness of the Captain's business affairs, and at least one of the Point Reach pastors forgot his legitimate business for a little while and descended to the vulgar curiosity of the general crowd ; he afterward repented, and preached a sermon on "Tale-bearing," all evolved from his own personal experience.

Meanwhile, some of the natives drew themselves apart, and determined to seek the desired knowledge at the fountain-head. The sexton was one of them. The weather was rather early and cold for fishing, nevertheless he got out a boat next morning, went through the motions of fishing an hour or two off Twinnett's Island, and finally put ashore and endeavoured to get from the Captain some clams for bait. Before making his desire known, he adopted the customary precaution at Point Reach—of peeping through a window. The Captain was not so occupied as he had expected to find him. The old man was seated at a table in the principal room of the hut on the island, but, instead of having a mineralogical collection in front of him, he was looking at a number of written papers, which he handled with the manner of a man accustomed to such documents, instead of

an ancient mariner who could not even write his name without painful endeavour. When afterward the sexton made his way softly to the kitchen door, and proffered his modest request, he did not find, as he expected, Sam Jimmerson, whom the old man had left in charge, and who could and would talk a long time on small provocation, but Captain Twinnett himself, who shortly indicated the location of the clams, told the sexton to help himself, and shut the door with a force and celerity which had a permanently depressing influence on the seeker of the information.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PLEADINGS AND PROMISES.

IT required considerable effort, at that season of the year, for the Burnhams to get a boat to visit Twinnett's without attracting unnecessary attention of the people of the town, yet they succeeded, within two days, in reaching the island and received a hearty welcome from the old man.

"Now, Harry," said Mrs. Burnham, as her husband saved her from slipping on a mossy rock, "let us keep out of the way as much as possible, enjoy the beauties of nature, and let that girl chat with the old fellow, if he is to bring her any comfort regarding her father."

"If you leave her to talk to any one, my dear, whoever she talks to shouldn't be the person who is

responsible for the cooking. We are to eat the dinner, you know," said Burnham.

"Never mind; do let your luxury-loving soul suffer a little while for the sake of a friend. Come out here, and let's study what can be done to beautify the island. Let's lay it out as a landscape garden, in our minds. Anything to give those people an opportunity to say what may be necessary to make that dear girl happy again."

"You are very sure, after all, that she isn't flirting with the old Captain?" said Burnham. His wife looked at him indignantly, and saw his face composed into a permanent wink.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself," she said, "to tease me about such a thing as that? You know I had to imagine something from what I saw. I am sure you imagined something unusual too, only it is always the way in this family—I do all the talking, and if you hold your tongue you don't get blame for any of the blunders."

"Quite true, my dear; it shows the superiority of the male nature."

"You can go to one end of the island, and I will stay on the other, if you say another thing like that," said Mrs. Burnham; and then, to show how much in earnest she was, she put her arm in her husband's and leaned heavily upon him as the two walked about together.

"Now," said May Frayston to the old Captain, who was in his kitchen, "please tell me, for my own comfort—please promise, when I may have my dear father."

"Just as soon as I can manage it, my dear girl. All sorts of things may happen to prevent, you know —the law's delays, uncertainty as to findin' people, other things comin' in ahead in court, and everythin' of that kind; but I promise you that your father wants you as much as you can possibly want him, and nothin' that this old head of mine can do shall be left undone to bring everything out right just as soon as possible."

"I wish women were lawyers, and judges, and presidents, and secretaries, and all that sort of thing!" said May. "There wouldn't be any of this dreadful delay and talk, talk, talk, talk, that men seem to have to do."

"You do, eh?" said the Captain, looking at the girl and laughing. "Well, if all women were like you, I shouldn't mind their runnin' the world entirely. But, seein' they're not, and the change can't be made very quickly, we'd better let the men settle this particular matter. As long as they've begun it, it isn't well to make a change, you know, for a single job."

"I suppose I'll have to abide by your decision," said the girl, with rather a pretty pout, which the old man contemplated admiringly; "but at least you can tell me what you are going to do when you do it, and how you are going to do it? And don't be afraid to speak English properly. Don't drop your *g*'s so dreadfully; it's very annoying to a proper young schoolma'am like me."

The Captain put his hands into his pockets, threw his head back, and extended the front of his capacious sailor's shirt, as he remarked—

"Well, I don't know about the details as yet, but as for the general results, I confidently promise you one of the most artistic explosions that ever took place on the face of the earth. The finest exhibition of fireworks anywhere on Fourth of July night can't hold a candle to it. There is more than one person who must be got even with before your father can be himself again in the world, but when everything is all ready, just to touch a match to, as the saying is, I'll have your father appear so suddenly that you'll be astonished at it yourself. What *do* you suppose those fellows would think, if they knew where I had him stored, and how I've got him fixed?"

"The brutes! I don't care what they might think."

"That isn't right, that isn't right, child," said the old man. "You mustn't deny people a healthy surprise simply because they're not as good as you. You must remember that the rain falls on the just and the unjust, upon the good and the evil."

"Please don't quote Bible, or anything like it, about such a scamp as has given me and my family all this trouble in all these years," said May Frayston. She began to be excited at once, and paced up and down the little kitchen, until the Captain approached her, tapped her gently on the shoulder, and said—

"All in good time, my child; all in good time. Patience is a virtue, and such a good one that it is worth almost anything that it costs—and it has to cost a great deal in order to make people appreciate it, I suppose. If I don't know, I don't know who ought to."

"It's real shameful of me to complain at all, while

you have been so unselfish and thoughtful and careful, and all for my sake," said the girl.

"Oh! well, I've had your father's blessing through it all, you know. That's quite a help to me, being somewhat the same style of man, though maybe I don't look it."

The girl gave the old man an embrace and a kiss, and said—

"But promise me, can't you, that it shall happen during this summer? I want to see my father enjoying himself once more, and I know how precious the summer-time always was to him, when he was himself."

"I don't think there'll be any trouble whatever about getting everything fixed by summer," said the Captain; "in fact, I've been promising your father that he could have a glorious Fourth of July among his friends."

"Fourth of July? Oh, good, good, good!" exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands. "I hope, though," she continued, "that all those bad men will be hanged before that time, because I want to go to the execution."

"You dreadful girl!" exclaimed the Captain, in mock seriousness. "Your father will give you an up-and-down scolding for talking in that way, and displaying such a spirit. That isn't the sort of way he brought you up, I am sure. Besides, the law doesn't allow the hanging of people for nothing but theft and forgery."

"Well, I think it might hang people for breaking other folks' hearts. One might as well be mur-

dered as worried and tormented and disgraced to death."

The girl burst into tears, and the Captain, looking around, as if to see if her father might not suddenly appear and care for her, played the part of father himself, took her in his arms and said endearing words to her, until she suddenly wiped her eyes, looked up laughing, and said—

"I wonder how Mr. Maile will look in a full new Sing Sing spring suit?"

"I have not the slightest doubt," said the Captain, looking meditatively for a moment, "that he will see that it properly fits him, and that he will wear it with the dignity and grace of a man who realizes that clothes are nothing whatever, and the man inside them is everything. I don't know any one whom I ever met that can put on more the style of being exactly what he ought to be, at all times and in all circumstances, than that same person Maile."

"The scoundrel!" muttered May.

"Don't call him a scoundrel quite so soon, young woman, for at present he is nothing worse than a successful financier. No successful men—in business—are ever called scoundrels, you know. Your father neglected your education in that important particular."

"Of course he did, and I don't want any post-graduate course on the subject now. I know exactly what he thought about human nature."

"Well, Fourth of July isn't so far off, if you look at it from one standpoint—mine, for instance," said the Captain.

"You poor old man!" murmured the girl. "Are you sure all the trouble will be over by that time?"

"Sure as anything can be in this world; I hope it will be sooner, but if it isn't, why, Christmas is coming. Never give up, is my motto. I guess if a man as old as I can stick to that sort of thing, a young girl with all her spirits and health about her isn't going to let herself be outdone."

"You ought to be a preacher," said May Frayston, "instead of a—a——"

"Instead of a cook in an eating-house, I suppose, you were goin' to say? Don't be afraid; you can't hurt my feelings as easy as that."

"Fourth of July," murmured the girl; then she went into a reverie, which made her appearance so unusually charming, that the old man dropped whatever was in his hands, rushed up to her, and kissed her soundly. The girl did not resent the familiarity, but seemed to Mr. and Mrs. Burnham, who chanced just then to pass the window and look in, to invite a repetition of it.

"Dreadful!" ejaculated Burnham. "I wonder, my dear, that you don't make it the excuse for a scene. When you are chaperoning a young woman of high spirits and impulsiveness, I wonder that you can calmly tolerate such a spectacle."

"Harry!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, "if you don't stop tantalizing me, I'm sure I shall scream or do something dreadful. I'm entirely satisfied that May's father is still alive, and that she knows it, and that Captain Twinnett is a go-between for them; but how, or why, or when, the explanation is to come—

oh, it almost makes me fly out of my senses to think of it!"

"Don't think of it, then, my dear," said Burnham calmly lighting a cigar, "because——"

By way of interruption, Mrs. Burnham blew out the match which her husband was carefully cherishing.

"Too late, my dear," continued Burnham, puffing until his cigar threw off great clouds of smoke.

"It was real mean of me," said Mrs. Burnham. "But, Harry dear, do tell me something to quiet my mind. Don't you suppose the Captain is Frayston's father, or cousin, or uncle, or something?"

"Something, undoubtedly; but, my dear girl, my mind is hopelessly at sea on the subject. If I were to allow myself to think of it, I couldn't attend to business. I only know that Paul Frayston was a remarkably clear-headed fellow, in spite of the set for whom he allowed himself to go West. The Captain has an honest way about him, and the manner in which he involved that fellow Maile so that before witnesses he made a confession of forgery shows that he is devoted to Frayston's interests, and probably acting according to very close instructions."

"Harry," said Mrs. Burnham, who had not seemed to listen for a moment or two, "I sometimes wonder whether the whole affair isn't a melodrama, and if the Captain isn't May's father himself in disguise?"

"Well," said Burnham, taking his cigar from his mouth and contemplating his wife anxiously, "I'm afraid you're losing your senses."

CHAPTER XIX.

ALONE WITH HIS CONSCIENCE.

MR. MAILE sat in his cosy sitting-room late one spring afternoon, and although he was an ardent admirer of beauty in all its forms, he appeared entirely unconscious of a great deal which art and nature were endeavouring to do for him on that particular day. On the opposite side of the street, in a window of a costly residence, sat a young lady reading—quite a pretty young lady, too, yet Mr. Maile seemed entirely oblivious of her presence. From the western sky came a hazy light which made even the roofs of New York beautiful, and over the street crept a glow of sunshine so mellow that the moving figures of men and women were made picturesque by it, no matter how common their attire or awkward their manner.

None of these things moved Mr. Maile. He frowned, twirled his moustache, bit his finger-nails, and finally sprang from his chair, and exclaimed—

"At first it seemed that the thing would be utterly impossible, but the more I think of it the more inclined I am to endeavour to do it in some way. I never should have allowed myself to fall in love had I any idea that its effect upon the conscience would be so powerful. Unless I stop thinking on the subject I shall yet make a confession so full that I may find it advisable to leave the country afterwards. In

that case, where would my love-affair be? Nonsense! The thing must not be done."

Mr. Maile arose, walked across the room, handled some papers on his desk, returned again to the window, looked across the street and saw the attractive young woman in the window; but, instead of being at all pleased, he uttered an impatient exclamation, and turned his back sharply to the light. He stood in a thoughtful attitude for a moment or two, turned about, and finally threw himself again into his easy-chair, muttering—

"If I knew how to do it without putting myself in too bad a light, I really would do it, no matter what I might lose. The longer I think of it the more shocking it appears, that I am really paying court to the daughter of the man whom I have used so shockingly, and who owes his death probably, possibly at any rate, to my—well, call it business sharpness. Certainly he never would have disappeared had it not been for that forged paper. Now that he is gone, and been gone so long that he ought to be at rest, whether he is alive or dead, I am more troubled about him than I was in the first place. Human nature is a very curious article."

The young lady across the street glanced towards Mr. Maile's window. He was sure that she looked directly at him; but, instead of availing himself of an opportunity to change the unpleasant current of his thought, he deliberately turned his eyes away again, and continued muttering to himself.

"I wonder how it would do to have a document cast up from the sea, somehow, somewhere, giving

such a statement as Frayston might honestly make about his own case? I think I may say without unpardonable pride that I know a person who could write such a statement in a manner which would make it attractive to the entire newspaper press and to all newspaper readers beside. It would be in penmanship which any one would recognize as Frayston's, too. Such a statement would certainly have the effect of clearing his name and reputation to a very large extent, notably in the mind of his own daughter, who, above all persons alive or dead, I should like to please.

"But how far would it be safe to go in such a paper? I don't care about supplying rope to hang myself with. Suppose I were to give about half the particulars of the manner in which that crooked paper was put upon the market and traced to him? It might make a great deal of trouble yet in business circles, and set some inquisitive fellows to work deeper into the matter. The results of such an examination might be highly unpleasing to me. Still, if I'm going to think at all about myself in the matter, I may as well give up the whole subject; for, no matter from which end I look at it, it is just as severe upon the unfortunate person who now feels called upon to make the explanation.

"Suppose I were to tell the entire truth. Ugh! it makes me tremble to think of it. Of course, I should have to leave the country; couldn't marry—at least, not the woman I want to marry. Oh, pshaw! That thing isn't to be thought of at all for an instant. Still, I never shall be able to sleep peaceably again

until I have done something in some way to ease my own conscience, to say nothing of what I ought to do for the sake of the woman who seems entirely sincere in her promises to me. I wish she showed more signs of loving me, for, Heaven knows, whatever faults I have, I am sincere in my affection for her. Still, it doesn't seem to be the fashion in love nowadays for ladies to be at all demonstrative or even confidential."

Mr. Maile again began pacing his floor. He stopped for a long while and looked intently at a picture upon his wall, a picture which he had seen a thousand times before and never particularly admired. No amount of looking, however, could divert his mind from the subject upon which it had been fixed all the afternoon; so with a sigh he turned away, and resumed his soliloquy as follows—

"I don't have to risk it for conscience sake alone, but also for my own personal and selfish reasons, for I see no other way of entirely clearing Frayston's reputation in the mind of his daughter, and I have been so completely absorbed in financial and material affairs for her sake that it has not occurred to me until lately, that no amount of property returned to her will entirely fulfil the conditions on which she has agreed to be my wife. Where conscience and self-interest agree, a man certainly ought to be able to proceed with promptness and directness. And yet—and yet—and yet——

"Suppose Frayston isn't dead after all—little although I believe are the chances of his having escaped drowning—what may be the effect on him and his

prospects, should he ever turn up again, when he finds still another forgery afloat and bearing his name? I have my doubts, very strong ones, as to whether he would take the effort as kindly as it was meant. It certainly would be a very awkward thing to face and have investigated by a man as determined and able as he, and as angry as he certainly would be at finding such a paper in existence. There are enough papers already with his name to them to keep him very busy should he begin to trace them one after another. In the event of his reappearance, I shall certainly hope to be already securely wedded to his only daughter, so that for family reasons he will not feel inclined to move very energetically.

"But should I be so married, which Heaven grant, and he be able to trace everything to the original source, how much happiness will there remain in my married condition? I certainly cannot expect that girl to respect me, or even endure me, after she knows, should she ever know it, the real cause of all her father's troubles. I have a suspicion once in a while that she does not thoroughly respect me now, and does not understand me; but her occasional look of curiosity and doubt, and almost indifference, are delight itself compared with what a single scornful look would be from those eyes.

"Why can't I devise a plan of throwing all the responsibility upon some one else, thus clearing Frayston and clearing myself also? That's a plan that might work."

Again Maile paced the floor, this time quickly, nervously, and with a look of intentness on his face.

The longer he walked, the more rapid became his pace, and at length he exclaimed aloud—

"That's the best plan, after all. Even my newly sensitized conscience can't see anything wrong in laying a lot of blame upon some individual who doesn't exist. It certainly would make matters happier and pleasanter for all persons concerned, and give a fair chance in the world to the man who really, for the first time in his life, wants to act honestly and fairly to all his fellow-beings, and is in such a tangle that he doesn't see how otherwise he possibly can do it.

"I might do it in this way. I could get up a document to come through the mails, in some way or other, purporting to be from some successful forger who hasn't yet been discovered, and acknowledging that he is in sickness and destitution, expecting to die, and wishing to make a clean breast of all his ill-doings. Then if I, who have been Frayston's strongest detractor, would accept the thing as genuine, every one else would act according to my opinion. That would clear Frayston, and it would also throw the blame off my shoulders, or at least make it impossible for any one to have any suspicions in this direction.

"Maile, my dear fellow, you've struck the proper plan at last. I knew you would if you thought long enough about it. Now for business."

So saying, Mr. Maile dropped at his desk and began writing with great activity. He covered page after page of paper, and as he wrote his cheeks glowed and his eyes sparkled. Suddenly he dropped his pen, and exclaimed—

"A confession from a person without a name that any one knows, and dating from no place where the writer can be found, can't be expected to have much influence upon public opinion. Frayston's friends would accept it—a man's friends seldom examine very closely the evidence which reads just as they would have it—but if the thing got into the newspapers —hang newspapers!—it would be just like some busybody of an editor to have it investigated and pronounced a fraud. Newspapers have upset too many of my business plans already.

"Ha! now I have it! There was Brewingford, who died just after New Year's Day; he wouldn't be a bad man to charge with all the mischief. He was one of our crowd, and almost any one who knew him would be willing to believe any knavery of him, particularly if it were confessed over his own signature. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* Yes, that's a good rule, on general principles, but where's the harm in saying anything bad about a fellow who was about as bad as any one could be, and who didn't leave behind him any one who was interested in him? He was an Englishman; he often said his family had disowned him, and he had returned the compliment, and he admitted that even the name he bore was not his own. I can't see how there can be any harm in laying anything to such a disreputable fellow, when to fasten the thing on him would be to clear an honest man's name, make a sweet woman happy, and give a penitent scoundrel a chance to lead an honest life.

"It shall be done! Brewingford, you shall be my

scapegoat. If you're in heaven, forgive me for the good 'twill do; if you're in the other place, help me, out of your never-failing sympathy, with everything crooked and rascally. You can't prevent me, you know, for I've some of your penmanship in my desk, which will serve as a model, and I've often signed your name for you when you were too drunk to sign it yourself."

Again Maile addressed himself industriously to the task of making a rough draft of the proposed confession.

CHAPTER XX.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

A KNOCK at the door disturbed Mr. Maile's work.

"Come in!" he exclaimed sharply, throwing his arm across the writing in front of him.

"Some one below wishes to see you, sir," said a servant.

"I'm busy to-day; tell him to come some other time," said Maile. "Who is it?"

"Queer-looking old man, sir; didn't give any name except 'the Captain.'"

"Confound it!" muttered Maile to himself; and then he said aloud, "Very well; show him up."

Maile laid aside his paper, closed the top of his desk, rose quickly, lit a cigar, and by the time Captain Twinnett was ushered in, he seemed to be entirely at leisure, with nothing whatever on his mind.

"Beg your pardon for intrudin', sir," said the Captain, rolling into the room, and beaming amiably about through his brown goggles, "but I got a letter from the West that I thought you ought to know somethin' about, and mebbe you'd rather ask me some questions after you'd read it, so I come in with it myself. Hope I didn't make any mistake about it, sir?"

"Oh no, certainly not; quite right of you," said Maile, impatiently extending his hand for the letter.

"I've got it here somewhere," said the Captain, taking from one of his pockets an assortment of newspaper scraps, small paper packages, a bag of smoking tobacco, and some papers that looked as if he might have carried them through several shipwrecks. "Let me see," he continued, fumbling over the various contents of the pockets, "it must be this. No; here it is—here it is, sir."

Maile took the paper quickly, opened it, and read as follows:—

"CAPTAIN TWINNETT,

"I write these few lines to tell you that a fellow has been going around here lately, lookin' at that there Frayston property, an' he's doin' work on it, an' he says he's doin' it for the old man's heirs; an' as I saw you doin' work there, an' promised to let you know how things was goin' on if anythin' happened, I jest send you these few lines to tell you this. That's all this time.

"Yours truly,

"BILL SMITH."

"Who is this man Smith?" demanded Maile.

"He's a sort of partner I picked up out there, sir, that I asked to let me know in case anybody tried to jump any of them claims. I thought it was the safest thing for you, you know."

"Yes, quite right," said Maile, re-reading the letter. "But I don't understand it at all."

"Can't you think of any way of headin' the feller off, sir?" asked the Captain.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Maile, impatiently; "I shall have to think about it. Suppose you don't go out of town for two or three hours; let me meet you, say at nine o'clock, down at the restaurant where I first took you?"

"All right, sir," said the Captain, fingering his hat-brim, and looking aimlessly about the room once more; "but mebbe I could think of somethin' to help you along out of this scrape if I was to ask you a question or two before I went away, and then rolled it about in my mind. I don't know how that might be, sir."

"Ask anything you think of, Captain," said Maile. "Two heads are better than one very often."

"Thank you, sir; I don't think so very much of my head, and yet they do say that a blind pig will stumble on an acorn once in a while."

"What questions do you want to ask?" said Maile.

"Well, sir, I was only goin' to ask whether it mightn't be well to find out who this feller is out there — cause either he's a friend of the family, or some of the work that's been done might make trouble for—well, you."

"I don't see that there's time to find out promptly about that, so as to come to any conclusion at once," said Maile.

"Like enough not, sir; but, in case it ain't done, wouldn't it be better for me to get out of sight?"

"Well, really," said Maile, looking suspiciously at the Captain, "I really don't see why."

"Well, suppose the two claims get to—get into collision, as we say at sea, an' there should be a row an' a lawsuit on here, like them things sometimes does turn out, an' folks got to comin' for me an' pumpin' me pretty hard in court, why, mebbe I wouldn't be smart enough to tell everythin' just the way it ought to be told; so's to keep it all right for you, sir."

"You needn't trouble yourself the least bit on that score," said Maile. "There is plenty of time to get out of the country, if it's necessary, after one is summoned as a witness. I'll see you lose nothing by it. In fact, if it's necessary, I'll buy all your property at your own valuation, and pay you a handsome indemnity besides for the loss of whatever business you might expect during the time in which you are looking for something better to do. A man of your sort is sure to come down safely on his feet somewhere, Captain."

"Much obliged to you, sir, for the compliment. I really think you are about right in it. I've been around a good deal in my day, sir; had some pretty hard knocks, but always managed to turn up right end first."

"I can believe that very readily," said Maile, with a smile.

"Well, there's one thing more, sir, that I may as well tell you before I go out. I wanted to break the news to you gently, 'cause I was afraid all in a lump it might trouble you considerable, but the fact is there's a good deal worse than that letter tells about. There's another letter."

"Worse? another letter? What is it?"

"Well, sir, try to keep yourself cool now, 'cause this here other letter is a good deal worse than that one; it's got somethin' in it that is the last thing in the world that you'll want to read. I hope you're feelin' your very best to-night, sir," said the Captain, placing his right hand again in his pocket, yet apparently cherishing its contents with his left.

"Let me see it!" demanded Maile.

"You're sure you're feelin' your very best, sir? got a good grip on yourself all over?"

"Don't wait for that. Give me the letter—quickly!" exclaimed Maile.

"All right, sir; just as you say," said the Captain, again taking out all the contents of his pockets and fumbling them over until he had selected a piece of paper, which he handed to his employer.

Maile took the letter in his hands, which trembled so that it was with some difficulty that he opened the folds. The Captain stood regarding him with considerable interest and apparently no little curiosity. Maile at last succeeded in opening the letter and reading it, rapidly and in a low tone. The contents were as follows:—

"DEAR PARD,

"The fellow that's done the work on them there Frayston claims is that same fellow Frayston hisself."

The letter dropped from Maile's hand to the floor. The Captain stooped, picked it up, and handed it back, remarking as he did so—

"I asked you, sir, you remember, if you had a good grip on yourself before you took that letter. I knowed it'd fluster you some; it couldn't help doin' it, though you be one of the coolest men I ever seed in my life."

Maile again took the letter, this time mechanically, and read as follows:—

"There can't be no mistake about the man, 'cause I knew him when he first was here. I saw him work, I knowed the marks about him, an' I knowed his style, and I knowed his voice too; and that ain't all, but, as I told you when you was here, he was a friend to me once, and I can't be mistaken about him any way After lookin' at him for three or four days, I at last went up to him and asked him if that wasn't his name, an' he owned up that it was, but he didn't want anybody to know it, bein' as he wanted to surprise some folks. Nobody that used to see him when he was first here would know him again now for the way he looks, he said, and I think he was right. Seein' things is this way, I reckon you'd better not meddle with that claim any more, 'cause he's a pretty nasty fellow to fool with when he gets mad, as I seed in old times. I'll let you know more about him if I find anything out. So no more this time.

"Yours truly,

"BILL SMITH."

Maile dropped the hand which held the letter, and gazed through the window into the approaching dusk Captain Twinnett eyed him as closely as if he were a new specimen of fish with which he wished to become intimately acquainted. Maile stood motionless for several minutes, and might have stood in the same attitude much longer had not the Captain remarked—

"Well, sir, shall I go on down to the restaurant an' wait for you, like you told me?"

Maile did not answer for a moment; and at last said, in a voice entirely unlike his habitual tone—

"I don't know; perhaps you'd better. On second thought, I guess you'd better go back home. I'll communicate with you there—perhaps run up to see you; don't go away from home for several days—or, at least, until you see me or hear from me."

"All right, sir," said the Captain. "Good evenin'."

As the Captain walked down the stairway, he muttered to himself—

"Didn't even have the manners to give me back my good-night. Strange how easy some kinds of men can have their manners upset. Well, I guess I'll have my revenge in one way; I'll bet he don't do any too much sleepin' this night. I wish I hadn't put in my last remark so quick; I really would enjoy standin' there an' studyin' that fellow for about an hour, I think. But I don't s'pose any of the good things of life can go on for ever.

"Wish the good folks at Point Reach had been there to see the fellow weaken! When a rascal like that breaks down, it's an awful big job; there's so much been held back for so long. Kinder pitiful, too,

seeing what's on his mind, an' who he's in love with If anythin' could give me a set-back at what I'm doin', it's the thought that he loves that gal—an' of course loves her in earnest, for nobody could be very near her long an' not have whatever was good in him brought out.

"Well, p'raps that's to be his punishment. I don't know what could hurt that feller worse than to have anythin' good come to the surface of him."

CHAPTER XXI.

SOME EXPLANATIONS.

ON returning to Point Reach, Captain Twinnett did not go to his own island, but by devious ways retraced his steps and spent the night at the local hotel. The next morning the Burnhams were surprised, while at breakfast, by being informed by the servant that an odd-looking old sailor man was at the door, and wished to see Mr. Burnham.

"Why, Captain Twinnett!" exclaimed Burnham, as he himself went to the door; "this is an unexpected pleasure. Come right into the house; my servants seem to be stupid about recognizing my acquaintances."

"That's all right, sir; I knew I didn't look much like a regular visitor to houses like yourn, but I didn't have a chance to put on my good clothes, an' I had somethin' I wanted very much to tell ye."

"Come right in," said Burnham, leading the Captain to the room which was called the study, for the usual reason that study was the last thing ever thought of in that room. Burnham offered the Captain a very easy chair, found him a good cigar at once, suggested that he could have something stronger if he would like it, and then took a chair himself.

"No, nothing to drink," said the Captain. "I want my head very cool this morning, for what I'm going to tell you may make you ask a lot of questions, an' I'd like to answer 'em to your entire satisfaction."

"I'm all attention, Captain," said Burnham.

"Well, sir, I'd like to begin by askin' you a question. Do you still think as much as you ever did of your old acquaintance, Paul Frayston?"

"He was more than an acquaintance to me, Captain. He was my friend; at least, I was his friend, and always admired him heartily. I think all the more of his memory now that he is gone."

"Good!" said the Captain, rubbing his hands together, and seeming about to spring from his chair and shake hands with his entertainer. "Very well, sir; then I s'pose you won't be sorry to hear that Frayston ain't dead, and never was dead?"

"Captain Twinnett!" exclaimed Burnham, arising in haste, "do you really mean what you are saying, or is this only an opinion of yours?"

"Well, sir, it is an opinion, but it's got a pretty good foundation to depend on, bein' that I've seen Paul Frayston lately, an' as I always knowed him very well I can't be mistaken about him. Still more,

he's owned up to me that he is the same man, an' not a ghost, or anythin' of the kind."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Burnham. "Just wait one moment." He dashed from the room, and returned in an instant, accompanied by his wife. "Nell," said Burnham, placing a chair where his wife could occupy it, "seat yourself comfortably; hold on to the chair with both hands, for what I am about to tell you will make you doubt your own senses. Paul Frayston is alive—no more dead than I am! Captain Twinnett has seen him recently, and talked with him."

"Merciful heavens!" gasped Mrs. Burnham.

"That's about the size of it, ma'am," said the Captain; "it will be a mercy of Heaven to some people, though I don't know that it'll make some others very happy, particularly one person that you and I have seen a good deal of of late. I don't s'pose I need to mention any names."

"May must know about this at once!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham; "I'll take her the news this very morning."

"You needn't give yourself the trouble, ma'am," said the Captain, with some gyrations which seemed unavoidable. "She knows all about it already, and to tell you the honest truth, now that there's no need of hidin' things any longer, she always has knowed it, only she hain't been able to tell all she knowed to anybody else. She's had to keep a mighty sharp guard on her tongue, ma'am, for a long time. It's a splendid discipline for her, if such things is discipline to young women, which sometimes I doubt."

"You seem to have quite an accurate estimate of young women, Captain Twinnett," said Burnham.

"Oh, Harry, don't drop into chaff now, please!" said Mrs. Burnham; "do let Captain Twinnett tell us everything he can—all he knows."

"Well, ma'am," said the Captain, "if I didn't tell you anything but what I know, the story wouldn't be very long; but I do know considerable about Paul Frayston, and seein' that your husband has been one of the very few men that stuck tight to his memory, and seed that it didn't have any more mud throwed on it than he could not help while he was around, I've come to tell him about it first, so that he shan't be too much surprised if he sees the man turn up again, lookin' just as he always did, an' with nothin' at all against his character in any way, shape, or manner."

"I always thought that it must be so some day, somehow," said Burnham, "yet I couldn't see the way, and I've done all I could in a gentle way to discourage that poor girl from ever expecting to see her father again."

"Well, sir, though it probably won't be any comfort to you to know it, nothin' that you've said in that line has done the slightest bit of good in that direction; for, as I said before, she's knowed he was all right, and knowed it for a long time. And that ain't all, but almost all she knowed about it came right through me. P'raps that'll explain some things that mebbe seemed a little mystifyin' to you before. For instance, sometimes when you're been over to the island with her."

Burnham looked quizzically at his wife, whose eyes met his; then Mrs. Burnham flushed, and gave a defiant toss of her head.

"I shan't tease you any more about it, dear," said Burnham. "Go on, Captain; we're all attention. Begin at the beginning, please, if you can. How was it that Frayston really disappeared?"

"Well, sir, the way of it was this," said the Captain. "Them forgeries he'd heard somethin' about, an' heard that they was likely to be throwed on him, an' he had an idee who it was that done 'em—that it was a mighty smart feller; an' he knowed that the feller was after his property; an', rather than stand any chance of bein' arrested an' tried an' convicted on evidence that he knowed that feller was quite smart enough to make up, an' wasn't any too good to put on him, he made up his mind the best thing for him to do would be to disappear, an' the best way to do it without makin' much scandal, an' yet so as to make some folks show their hands afterwards, would be to do it in such a way that folks would think he was dead. So, leavin' word where his daughter could get it that she mustn't ever think him dead, because he was too smart for that, he went off swimmin' in a way that you've heard of before probably—leavin' his clothes on the shore."

"Yes, I know," said Burnham.

"Well, sir, if the fellers that used them clothes for evidence could have seen what else went on that evenin' they'd have been a little more careful about the way they talked, for that feller Frayston had been so sly that he'd bought a boat from a boy

several miles up the creek that very day, and he'd got it down there near his place, and nobody'd seen it, an' he got that boat out in the water in front of his place that evenin' when there wasn't nobody around, and there was some more clothes in that boat—an' some grub an' water too."

"Aha! I begin to see," said Burnham.

"Yes," said the Captain; "I knowed you would when I told you that much. Well, he got into that boat, an' he dressed himself, an' he pulled away in the dusk, and he fooled aroun' in the Sound a while until he met a schooner that was going up to Maine. An' he pretended to want to go up that way hisself, an' had money enough to pay his passage; so they took him along.

"From Maine he went along to Canada; then he got out to the French fishin' islands, an' he got hisself took aboard one of the French fishin' craft as a sick man that needed to be on the water, an' didn't care to be a great ways off from land all the time, an' as he had money enough to pay for whatever he wanted, an' was a good-natured feller, an' knew the French lingo anyhow—— I s'pose you remember that he could talk French, don't you?"

"Oh yes," said Burnham. "Go on."

"Well, as he seemed to be a pretty desirable passenger on all accounts, they took him along. He had a good deal of taste for salt water, anyhow, you know—used to sail a boat a good deal, wasn't a very bad yachtsman, and pretty soon he learned how to handle the sails of a sea-goin' boat in pretty rough weather, an' he liked that sort of life so well that he

stayed there rather longer than he meant to, but always kept in communication with his daughter."

"The sly little fox!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham. "To think of the amount of sympathy that I've wasted on that girl in these years!"

"Well, ma'am," said the Captain, soothingly, "I reckon she's worth it, isn't she? I've seen a good deal of gals in my time. I used to be a better-lookin' man than I am now, and I do tell you that I never saw the beat o' that gal on the face of this earth. Honestly, now, ma'am, did you?"

"Not I!" said Mrs. Burnham, enthusiastically. "May Frayston is one of the most splendid girls I ever knew in my life, and I think all the more of her now, after what you've told me. To think that she should be so brave and self-contained, and carry such a big secret! Why, I——"

"You couldn't have kept a secret so long, could you, dear?" said Burnham.

"Oh, nonsense! that isn't what I meant. Go on, Captain, please. Stop this man's chatter."

"Well, he sailed about with the French fishermen a while, an' then he took a notion to take a trip in a bark that was going from Canada down to New Orleans, an' he went around one place an' another, always makin' it a p'int to get his mail, because his daughter saved all the New York papers for him, especially anything that had any reference to his case in it. He expected somehow or other that the thing would come out all straight accordin' as things do in books to people that's thoroughly honest and square and above-board, but he got pretty tired at last waitin'

for the trouble to cure itself, so it seemed to him that he'd better go to work and do somethin' to the point. So he came back to the States again, and hung around pretty close to New York, watching his chances.

"About this time in the story, sir, I come in. Frayston wanted to be in pretty close communication with his daughter, an' as I had met him at sea, an' been pretty decent to him, he made up his mind I was a kind of an honest sort of a fellow, an' as he had considerable money along with him, he arranged it that I should take the island. Folks seem to think that I've got lots of money of my own. Well, everythin' that I've got out on that there island has been at his expense, but he didn't grudge it at all. It was so that somebody that knowed him and knowed his daughter could keep up communication with him at all times and at mighty short notice."

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham. "Captain Twinnett, have you really had Mr. Frayston on the island, hidden away there somewhere all the while you have been there?"

"My dear madam," said the Captain, "I do assure you, on my word of honour—and Paul Frayston'll take that, I know, so you ought to be willin' to if you're a friend of his—I do assure you, on my word of honour, that I'm the only man that lives aboard that island, so you needn't go and look for him out there. Enough said that I knowed where he was, an' his daughter knowed where he was, an' I was the go-between for 'em."

"That explains everything," said Mrs. Burnham, decidedly—"everything."

"Then," said Burnham, with a quizzical look at his wife, "I suppose you don't care for the Captain to go on any longer with his story?"

"Oh yes; to be sure I do. Don't be silly, Harry. I meant that it explains everything about—about May."

"I shall have to tell the Captain, even at the risk of interrupting an interesting story for a few moments——"

"Harry, if you do I'll never speak to you again."

"Then I shan't have to tell the Captain," said Mr. Burnham, decisively. "Please go on with the story, Captain."

"I know what it was," said the Captain, with a great chuckle. "If the lady'll excuse me for tellin' about her, I guess the trouble was she thought that gal was takin' a shine to me—an old ragged sailor."

"Yes, Captain," said Mrs. Burnham, "that really is it. I beg pardon of both of you. I beg your pardon now, and I shall say the same to May as soon as I meet her. Now go on with the story, please."

"Well, after that hard operation in writin'—over on the island, that you and your wife was witnesses of—an' all of which I let my old friend know about pretty quick, Frayston made up his mind that he had evidence enough to show where all them forgeries come from. But as he knowed that at the same time the feller was tryin' to get possession of all his property, he thought he'd go and look after the property first. So he got me to go out West with him."

"But didn't he know," asked Mrs. Burnham, "that all this while that scamp Maile was making love to his daughter?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, he knew all about that. He didn't exactly approve of it, but the gal started it herself in a kind of desperation, thinkin' that, with her woman's wits, she'd be smart enough to get some information or clue out of the scamp. She thought that by talkin' about the property a good deal to him he might let out somethin', somehow, some way, that would help her to help her father. You see, ma'am, gals ain't as patient as old men—though I can't say Frayston is so awful old yet—an' as she thought she could do it, it came to her father that she might try her wits for a little while. He knew perfectly well that it wouldn't be possible for her to fall in love with him, although he is a very fascinatin' feller to some women apparently; but she has too much of her father's blood in her to trust a feller of that kind. Her father never did it hisself. Maile was only one of a crowd that Frayston was in business with, and he wouldn't have been one of the crowd if Frayston could have helped it."

"Then the sly little minx has really been making-believe all the while in her goings-on with Mr. Maile?" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham.

"Yes, ma'am; that's about the size of it," said the Captain.

"Artful girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham.

"Why, there wasn't anything wonderful about it, ma'am, was there?" asked the old man. "Gals have cut up in that same way with men just for the fun of it, without havin' any particular reason behind their doin's, and without havin' any hope of doin' any good whatever. I don't see that there was anything

at all so dreadful about it, do you, ma'am?" said the Captain, earnestly.

He seemed so very much in earnest that Mrs. Burnham hastened to say that anything that May Frayston did was quite right, and, for her own part, she was terribly ashamed of herself for ever having distrusted or suspected her in the least, although she must still admit that appearances had been very much against her at times. Then she begged the Captain to continue his story.

"Well," said the Captain, "I don't know that there's much more story to tell, except that Frayston's been out there, and seen that his property is all safe, an' made his titles all good and secure, an' turned the property over, accordin' to law, to responsible people out there, an' got a big pile of money on it; an' he's got enough evidence now in writin', thanks to you and me as witnesses, to bring a storm around that fellow Maile's ears that will drive Maile to some other part of the world."

"It ought to drive him into the penitentiary!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, indignantly.

"Yes, it ought, ma'am," sighed the Captain, "but it won't. That was one of the greatest consolations of Frayston for a long time, that he was goin' to get things so as to put that fellow in convict's stripes for a good long while. 'Fraid he can't do it now." And here the Captain sighed again.

"Why not, I should like to know?" asked Mrs. Burnham. "He has evidence enough, hasn't he?"

"Oh yes, ma'am; evidence enough to put half a dozen fellows in jail. But s'posin' the case was your

own, ma'am, an' that she was your daughter, an' that the feller, in spite of all he'd done, really was in love with her? I don't know another good thing about him except that. But he really was and is in love with that gal, an' Frayston is as sure about it as I am. S'posin' the case was in your family, ma'am; you couldn't do it, could you?—send to prison the man that you knew loved honestly your own daughter? It's agin' nature, ma'am, ain't it?"

Mrs. Burnham's eyes sought her husband's. In an instant her husband had her hand in his own.

"I knowed you'd agree with me about it," said the Captain, with the air of a man whose mind has been suddenly relieved by contact with other minds. "I s'pose the end of it will be that the fellow'll be allowed to run away."

"But," said Burnham, "when is Frayston coming back? I haven't been so excited about any bit of news in a long while. It seems to me I can't sleep again until I meet that fellow, look into his eyes, and shake hands with him, and see that he is really a living being. I don't doubt your words about him in the least, but sight is more comforting than faith, you know."

"Well, sir," said the Captain, "you won't have to wait very long. How would you and your wife like to make me a friendly visit to-morrow, an' bring Miss Frayston along with you? I shouldn't wonder if, some time during the day, Frayston would find his way to the island himself. I'll make the place as comfortable for you all day long as I possibly can."

"We'll go," said Mrs. Burnham, decidedly.

"My dear, you forget that Mrs. Cuyler Hyne's reception will be to-morrow, and that you wouldn't miss it for anything."

"I'll miss all the receptions for the next year for the sake of seeing May Frayston and her father united again," said Mrs. Burnham.

"God bless you for saying that, ma'am!" said the Captain, getting up and abruptly taking his leave.

"But, Captain," said Burnham, stopping the old man as he was backing out of the room, "I want to know more about my old friend. Is there nothing I can do to make his reappearance more pleasant and successful than he can do by himself?"

"Nothin' that I knows on, sir," said the Captain, promptly.

"Doesn't he need clothing, ready money——"

"Nothin' of the kind, sir; I've got his own word for it," said the Captain. "He always was a kind of stylish feller, I reckon; for he says to me again an' again, says he, 'Twinnett, old man, I ain't what I look. 'Spite of dirty clothes and a face that ain't been shaved for a long time, an' a good deal of sea-tan on me, I don't feel a day older than when I got away from the States, an' I reckon it won't take long for a tailor an' a barber to make me look just like I used to. Just let me get my sea-legs off, Twinnett, an' I'll make myself look so well that you won't know me if you meet me in the street. And yet, Twinnett, I'll be kinder sorry. It ain't pleasant to be took out of the world that one's once lived in, but it's been a great rest to have nothin' particular in the way of biziness

to think of for a long time, an' to have lived out in God's air an' sunshine, among all sorts of common an' half-way decent fellers, when I've had to deal for a long time with a lot of smooth-faced scoundrels that would rather go through a man's pockets, by ways strictly legal, than pass the time o' day with him.' That's 'bout the heft of the way he looked at it, sir, though mebbe he put it in better language."

As the old man concluded, he looked absent-mindedly at a blank wall in the hall, as if he were thinking about his old shipmate's views, and sympathizing with him. He seemed so full of the subject that Burnham did not disturb him for a moment; but finally the host said—

"Captain, I wish you would tell Frayston to come here at once, and make my house his home, and my bank account his, until everything is just as he wishes it. If I haven't as much money as he needs, I'll find ways of raising it at once: just tell him I've been doing unusually well in business for two or three years, and that I'm a great deal better off than when he last knew me. He is an independent sort of fellow, and I wouldn't for anything have him think that anything I offer could be of the slightest trouble to me."

"And," said Mrs. Burnham, who had followed her husband to the hall and overheard the conversation, "if my husband hasn't enough money for him, I have a few government bonds of my own that he is welcome to."

"God bless you both!" exclaimed the Captain, with an uncertain voice which seemed to be troubling

his throat. "I'll tell it all to him, an' he's the kind of man that don't never forget a kind word."

Again the Captain bowed himself out, thrust his hands into his pockets, and rolled down the garden path. Husband and wife watched him through the window. Suddenly the old man stopped, looked around, and waved his hat; Mrs. Burnham waved her hand in response, upon which the old fellow kissed his hand to her.

"Bless his honest old heart!" exclaimed the lady, with tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

MR. and Mrs. Burnham breakfasted so early the day after they had listened to Captain Twinnett's revelations, that they feared lest they should reach the island before the sole resident had left his humble couch.

"People who have no one to wake them are sure to sleep late," said Burnham, when his wife endeavoured to hurry him from home and toward the Captain's abode. "For instance, when you run up to see your mother for a week or two, and I am left to my own devices, I sleep——"

"So little," interrupted the wife, "that you do a half-day's work in the garden before breakfast. You need have no fear that Captain Twinnett will sleep late on this morning of all mornings, when he ex-

pects a visit from his old shipmate. How romantic that sounds!—old shipmate! How I should like to have seen Frayston in sailor clothes! He used to look simply splendid in his yachting uniform."

"Common sailors don't wear fine blue flannel, my dear," replied Burnham. "Knowing how great importance you attach to appearances, I'm glad you never chanced to see our lamented friend on shipboard. I'm afraid your respect for him would not have survived the shock."

"Let us hurry to the station for May," said Mrs. Burnham, dexterously changing the subject. "I suppose the poor dear girl is simply dying of impatience."

The "poor dear girl," when discovered, was in no such condition as her friend had feared. She was as neat, pretty, and composed as ever, as if going out to Twinnett's with the possibility of seeing her father was an everyday occurrence. Nevertheless there was a look of exultation in her eye, as Mrs. Burnham whispered to her husband.

"If Maile could see her now, and know what is in her mind!" whispered Burnham in reply.

The wife frowned, and said tragically—

"Never again mention his name—in connection with hers."

The trio were soon in a row-boat. Mrs. Burnham looked about inquiringly, and asked—

"Where is the man who is to row us over?"

"Here," said Burnham, casting the boat loose and taking the oars. "There shan't be any listeners today whom the Captain has not specially invited.

Besides, I'm going to remain just as long as I dare, or until I have a hint to leave, or find the Captain's promise too good to be true, and that Paul Frayston is to remain invisible for a while longer."

"May!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, as the boat headed for the island, "*do* tell us where your father has kept himself all this while? You can't help knowing that I'm simply dying of curiosity."

"Die just a little longer, Nell dear, and then you shall know all. It will be better for Captain Twinnett to tell you, for he knows so much more about it than I, don't you see?"

"But you might tell me just a little bit—enough to make me——"

"Want a little bit more," interrupted Burnham, between strokes of his oars.

"That's exactly the effect it would have, Nell," laughed May; "I'm a woman, and I know. Do be patient a little longer, dear; the Captain will tell it so much more picturesquely than I."

Long before the boat reached the island, May Frayston began waving a handkerchief, and Mrs. Burnham soon saw that the signal was being answered in a similar fashion by a figure which could belong to no one but Captain Twinnett.

"Harry," said Mrs. Burnham, "I've always thought there was something peculiar about the Captain that distinguished him from other men of his profession, and I haven't been able to make out what it is until now."

"It's his brown goggles, of course," panted Burnham. "I'm sure they weren't hard to see."

"He has to shield his eyes very carefully, you know!" exclaimed Miss Frayston.

"It isn't his goggles at all, stupid," said Mrs. Burnham. "It's that, no matter how roughly he may be dressed, he always has a handkerchief as white as snow."

"I suppose," said Miss Frayston, thoughtfully, "that it is a survival of inherited traits; some American sailors, you know, are descended from old families as good as the best."

By this time the trio were so near their destination that May Frayston began to shout questions across the water.

"Has father come yet?" she asked.

"Not yet," the Captain replied, in fog-horn tones; "but he'll be here in an hour or two."

"Ask him if he's real sure," said Mrs. Burnham, in a high state of excitement.

"Mrs. Burnham wants to know if you're real sure," shouted May, following the question with a long sweet laugh that floated musically over the water, and had so much of exultation in it that Mrs. Burnham said, with a trace of injured feeling in her voice—

"If you were so certain of it yourself, you might have told me so before now."

"Oh, you dear old goose!" exclaimed the girl, impulsively throwing her arms around her friend and leaning on her so heavily that Burnham's starboard oar "caught a crab," and caused the rower to roar—

"Trim boat!"

Two or three moments later, the skiff was alongside of the landing-stage at the Captain's little dock, and

the old man was holding it close by the aid of one of May Frayston's hands.

"You look more solemn than usual this morning, Captain," said the young lady, on being assisted to land.

"Can't help it, ma'am," said the Captain. "I'm feelin' kind o' doleful. This is the old man's last day on the island."

"Why, Captain!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham.

"Fact, ma'am," said the sailor. "Spite of all I've done for Paul Frayston, he says there ain't room here for him an' me too."

"Oh, I think that's just too horrid!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham. "Harry, can't you use your influence with Mr. Frayston when you see him, to be nicer to the Captain? Just think how we all shall miss the old man!"

"Shall you, though, ma'am? Excuse me;" and the Captain took one of Mrs. Burnham's hands in his own, pressed it warmly, bent over it, and kissed it.

"Now who's flirting with the Captain?" exclaimed May Frayston, her eyes dancing. "Harry, do you see what is going on?"

"I do," said Burnham, "and I don't hesitate to say that I heartily approve of it."

"Thankee, sir," said the Captain; "I always knowed you was a gentleman. The fact is, about this island, Frayston's goin' to fix up things a little nicer, an' keep it as a sort of summer home for him an' his daughter. He's took a great notion to it, an' thinks he'd like to spend a good deal of his time here. I guess you won't miss the clam-bakes an' other

pleasant times over here, for from what I know of him I guess he'll keep open house, an' have things as nice as anybody can have 'em. "I've seen him do some cookin' himself at sea, an' I must own up that he can do anythin' of the kind about as well as I can do it myself. I wouldn't own up to that much about any other livin' man, sir."

"He knew a good deal about such things before he went away," said May; "I ought to know, for I taught him a great deal of it myself."

"He couldn't have a better teacher, ma'am, I'm sure," said the Captain, gallantly.

"Don't you think, Nell," said May, with a roguish look, "that it's time for father to arrive and put a stop to this flirtation?"

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham.

The party followed Mrs. Burnham's eyes, and saw a small boat, containing one man, coming from the town toward the island.

"Oh no; that ain't him," said the Captain. "That's a barber I sent for. I want to spruce up a little, in respect to Frayston, an' I'm so out of the habit of that sort of thing that I can't trust myself to do it."

"Oh, Captain!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, "don't overdo it. You look so—so exactly as you ought."

"He looks just splendid!" declared May. "I'd give a hundred dollars—all of my last quarter's salary, to have a picture of him just as he stands."

"Is that so, ma'am?" asked the Captain. "Well, if you're in earnest you can have one for nothin', for I was took here once, in these same clothes, by one of them amateur fellers that goes cruisin' about lookin'

for the picturesque, as they call it. I thought p'raps somebody, some day, might care to call back a look at the old man who was always glad to see good company, an' hadn't any too much of it."

May Frayston impulsively threw her arms around her father's mysterious friend and kissed him ; when she released him, there were tears streaming from behind the old man's brown goggles. Burnham gently drew his wife aside and called her attention to some peculiarities of the growth of wind-swept sassafras trees, of which there were several on the island. From these he led her to the rocks on the other end of the little island, where May Frayston soon rejoined them, her own eyes looking as if they had sympathized with the Captain's.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EXIT TWINNETT.

THE boat containing the barber approached the island, and was directed by the Captain to the landing. The man stepped ashore, looked about him as if confused and perplexed, and finally said—

"I've come to shave a man and dress his hair, but I don't know who it is. He didn't sign any name, but sent me a five-dollar bill and a railroad ticket—said he was one of my old customers. Who's stopping here?"

"Come right along in, young man," said the Captain, "an' I'll find your fellow for you. He's been expectin' you, an' been kinder impatient, too."

"I always try to oblige my customers," said the barber, glibly, "and if he'd let me know what time the trains started, I might have got here earlier. I had to grind a nick out of a razor, and——"

"Young man," said the Captain, hastily, "keep the rest of your story for the man in the chair. He can't get away from it, but I might at the present moment. Just sit down a minute, while I go aloft."

Then the Captain went up the stairs of the cottage, and to his sleeping-apartments, where he made an entire change of attire, which made him, except for his face, appear in dress and figure like a business man, perhaps a gentleman, from the city. He spent some time in front of a long mirror, studying the effect, and muttering to himself—

"I ought to look natural in it. Goods, style, and colour are as much as possible like what once I wore. I wonder if I can be make decent of appearance again by that jaw-scraper? What language! It's time for me to drop sea-lingo, and talk like a civilized being—now I'm to be supplanted on the island by a smug-faced fellow in store clothes, smooth cheeks and a billy-cock hat."

The Captain looked indignant as he turned again to the mirror, removed his brown goggles, and studied the reflection of his hair and beard.

"I wouldn't make a bad study for a Viking—except for the goggles," said he, "if any one wished to paint one of those old scoundrels as they really looked.

My hair and beard haven't been touched for two years, except by my own scissors. Strange, what a difference such things—and goggles—can make in a man who's been a little proud of his appearance. If there wasn't a woman in the case, I—— Oh, see here, old man; brace up!"

Then the Captain took from a drawer a photograph and looked at it. The face was not that of a woman, but an alert, self-possessed man of affairs, who, except for a suspicion of white in his hair, might have seemed young. The Captain looked at it long and earnestly, and finally pulled himself together by whistling a merry air.

Then he replaced his goggles, descended to his main room, put his head out of the window, and shouted to Burnham and the ladies—

"Don't come in till I call you. You shall know as soon as he's here."

Then the Captain sat in an easy-chair with a low back, put his feet into another chair, and said to the barber—

"All ready?"

The tonsorial artist, who had been improving his leisure by staring through the windows at the pleasant views of land and water, briskly approached the chair, and seemed startled by the Captain's change of attire.

"Young man," said the Captain, "you used to have a customer named Frayston, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir," said the artist, without an instant of hesitation; "middle-sized man, good shoulders, hair rather thin on the top of his head, though he bought

a bottle of every tonic I ever recommended. I never had a nicer customer; every time I trimmed his hair he gave me a dollar extra."

"Yes," said the Captain, "that's he; that's just about the sort of fool he was. Well, young man, do you suppose you could shave and trim me up so that I'd look like Paul Frayston?"

"Why, sir," said the barber, with an exasperating grin, as he retreated a step or two to study the Captain's possibilities, "I'll do the best I can, but——"

The Captain removed his goggles, looked the barber full in the eye, and asked—

"But what?"

The barber started, turned pale, and gasped—

"Why, I do believe it's Mr. Frayston! There's that little mole at the side of the forehead, and—why, I thought I knowed that scarf-pin of yours, soon as I saw it; I wasn't sure——"

"All right," interrupted the occupant of the chair. "Get to work right away and make me look like myself again; I've been to sea so long that I don't know how I'll look. You can't take the brown and red off of my face and forehead, I suppose?"

"They're all the style this season of the year, sir," said the barber. "Any of my Wall-street customers would give anything for such a colour; 'twould make folks think he owned a yacht and sailed it. The colour won't make any difference in your looks; it can't change the shape of a man's face, or the expression of his eyes."

"Fire away, then, young man; I'm in a hurry to be myself again."

The barber seized shears with one hand, and a long ragged tuft of greyish hair with the other.

"Save the pieces," said the owner of the hair.

"Take off the beard too, sir?" asked the barber, after several moments of clipping.

"Yes; make me look just as I used to."

The shears snipped on; soon two distinct hirsute masses were heaped upon the table beside the brown goggles.

"Want to look at yourself, sir, an' see how you're gettin' along?"

"No; let it all break upon me at once."

The scissors continued their work; then the razor was taken in hand. There was the usual amount of sponging, drying, powdering, anointing, combing, and brushing, the subject keeping his eyes closed all the while. Finally the barber snatched a towel from beneath his customer's chin, and, through force of habit, shouted, "Next!" Then he apologized, and offered a hand-mirror.

Slowly the transformed man opened his eyes and beheld his own face in the glass. Then he regarded himself silently, soberly, for two or three moments; after which he turned to the barber and asked—

"Do I seem to have aged much? No nonsense, now; I want the truth."

"Hair's a little thinner, sir, but you don't look any older. Your cheeks are fuller; that keeps you from showing age."

"Do I look about as I did then?"

"Just exactly, sir; and you're in the same sort of

clothes you used to wear, which brings the resemblance back all the stronger."

"All right. Now get off to town as soon as you can; I want to be alone with my friends. Don't explain anything to them, but, as you put out, call to them that I'd be obliged if they would come."

Within two minutes the trio were in the room. Mr. and Mrs. Burnham started as if they had come face to face with a ghost; but May Frayston indulged in a quick bound, a tight embrace, and a loud shout of——

"Father!"

Then the girl raised her head, looked into her father's face, and continued—

"I didn't expect to see you this way; I didn't imagine you ever again could look as you used to look."

"Did you really expect to endure an old father with grizzled beard and head?"

"Yes; any sort of father, so again he was all my own."

"Bless your honest heart!" exclaimed Frayston.

Meanwhile the Burnhams, half retiring, were in amazement and confusion; but, as Frayston turned toward them, Burnham greeted him with an extended hand, and exclaimed—

"Welcome back from the dead, old fellow. You look just the same as ever."

"Thank you," said Frayston, with his old manner; "sit down. Have a cigar—if Mrs. Burnham will allow?"

"I'd allow anything to-day," said Nell, with dazed countenance; "I haven't enough self-command to protest against anything. It all seems impossible."

She looked blankly around the room, saw the hirsute deposits on the table, beside the brown goggles, and exclaimed, "What has Captain Twinnett been doing?"

"He?" said Frayston, turning to see what had prompted the question. "Ah, I see. Mrs. Burnham, I am sorry to be obliged to report that there"—he pointed at the table—"is all that remains of Captain Twinnett."

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, sinking into a chair, "you haven't killed him? Oh, what a silly question! But has he gone away without saying good-bye to us?"

"Burnham," said Frayston, after directing a most provoking smile at Mr. Burnham, "won't you kindly explain the situation to your wife?"

"I would if I could," drawled Burnham; "but I'll have to have everything explained to me first."

"You precious geese!" exclaimed May Frayston. "Can't you see that Captain Twinnett was merely father with his hair and beard untouched for two years, and a pair of brown goggles?"

Then it was Burnham's turn to succumb. On the contrary, however, he seized Frayston by both shoulders, shook him soundly, and exclaimed—

"You scoundrel! Never to have let your best friends know that you were alive!"

"One man is enough to keep a secret," said Fray-

ston, "though I did consent to let one woman into it." Then he looked at May, who returned his glance proudly, though with tears in her eyes.

"May Frayston!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnham, "do you dare to tell me that I've been mourning over you, and wasting sympathy on you as an orphan, all these months and years, when you could have made me happy with half a dozen words?"

"'Twas father's order," the girl replied.

"I hope I'll realize it all in the course of time," sighed Mrs. Burnham.

"Well, my dear," said Burnham, "for once your husband's superior mind has got down to the level of your own, and he too hopes to realize some day what has happened. Is it really true, Frayston, that all this time old Twinnett has been really you?—no one else?"

"Entirely true," said Frayston.

"You poor fellow!" murmured the guest.

"Thank you," said the host; "I really think I deserve a great deal of sympathy. It seemed the safest way to remain near New York and my daughter, without attracting attention and incurring special expense. I suspected the source of the forgeries traced to me, but feared unpleasant notoriety should I attempt to follow it up; beside, I had no proof to support me. I knew that I could keep watch of him only by being very near New York and seeing a number of people, so I hit upon the plan of starting a place of entertainment. I had money enough left to buy some fine wines and cigars; I

always was a fair amateur cook ; and the island was secluded enough to draw just the class of people who talk a great deal about other people. It was a rare streak of luck, however, that brought the scoundrel himself to the place."

"Not exactly luck, my friend ; 'twas I who advised him to take his party there, though I shouldn't have dared had I known the proprietor more truly."

"I am glad, then, that you didn't," said Frayston, "for little by little I've wormed myself into the fellow's confidence, and made him expose himself, until now I can put him in state prison whenever I like. You remember his operation here when I asked you and Mrs. Burnham to listen from a side room ?"

"Yes," said Burnham.

"I've put him deeper into the mire since then ; but the master stroke is to come to-day."

"Mercy ! Is he coming here ?" shuddered Mrs. Burnham.

"Only for a few moments ; the interview will not be unpleasant to any listeners, I assure you."

"He's comin' now," said Burnham, who sat where he commanded the approach from the town.

"May, will you take Mrs. Burnham to the upper floor ?" said Frayston.

Together the two men watched Maile nearing the island. Finally Frayston said—

"I really pity that fellow. He has spent a wretched day or two. He knows now that I am alive, that I have perfected titles to all the disputed mining

property, and that I am expected soon in New York. He is coming out here because I—Twinnett, that is, whom he has supposed his trustworthy confederate—have a new plan of escape for him."

"But how about the forgery charges against you?"

"He's coming here to assume them himself, and clear me, though he doesn't know it. He's here now. Will you remain with me?"

"Certainly."

Maile hurried up the dock, and seemed disappointed at seeing Burnham's face at the window. Frayston, rattling something metallic in his pocket, stepped behind a door.

"Ah, my dear fellow!" said Maile, entering the room; "this is an unexpected pleasure. Where is the Captain?"

Burnham, uncertain for a moment as to what he should say, recalled the manner in which he had been greeted an hour before; so he pointed to the evidences, on the table, of the barber's work, and said—

"There is all that remains of him."

"What! gone? The fool! He must have left something for me. Who is in charge here?"

"Paul Frayston!" exclaimed a voice which made Maile tremble. When Frayston himself appeared, Maile tottered and gasped.

"You fool!" roared Frayston, "no one but Paul Frayston was ever in charge here. Doesn't it make you feel proud of your knowledge of human nature? It was Paul Frayston, playing old sailor, who witnessed your forgeries; not only that, but he had other

people, within hearing, to hear you admit the forgeries and explain them. 'Twas Paul Frayston, *alias* Twinnett, that you sent West to look at his own mines, where he perfected his own titles. Don't you feel proud of your business capacity?"

Maile had, within two or three minutes, become a pitiable spectacle; he merely ejaculated—

"Well?"

"Sit down," said Frayston. "There—at the table—where the writing-materials are. Now write your confession of the forgeries traced to me."

"Suppose I refuse?" said the wretched man, endeavouring to rally himself.

"Then," said Frayston, taking handcuffs from his pocket, "I'll place you where you will wish you'd obeyed me. Make a full confession, and I'll give you twenty-four hours in which to leave the country."

Maile bit his nails, and began writing; Frayston looked over his shoulder. At length the paper was completed, and Frayston called Burnham to witness the signature. Then he took the paper in his own hands, shook Maile's chair rudely, and exclaimed—

"Go!"

"Mr. Frayston," said Maile, with an angry flush, "I deserve at least common civility at your hands. I did you a great wrong, but I have endeavoured to make restitution. I have striven single-handed against the entire gang, to regain your property for your daughter. I loved her; I——"

"Yes, I know," said Frayston, between his teeth; "that was part of the game. She was one of my

detectives. It ought to make you proud of yourself as a lover."

Maile again lost his self-possession; then he looked sheepish, and, without saying a word, left the house, rowed ashore, and disappeared from New York business circles that same day.

* * * * *

"It shall always be called 'Twinnett's,'" said Frayston to his daughter, as they sat, a few days later, on the piazza of their summer island home.

THE END.

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